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SPERE SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA

No. 5

CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE
OF
SHAKESPEARE'S IDENTITY

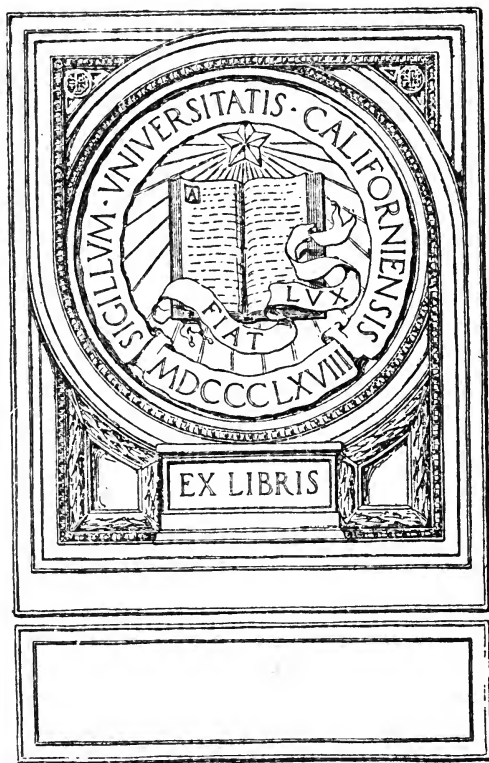
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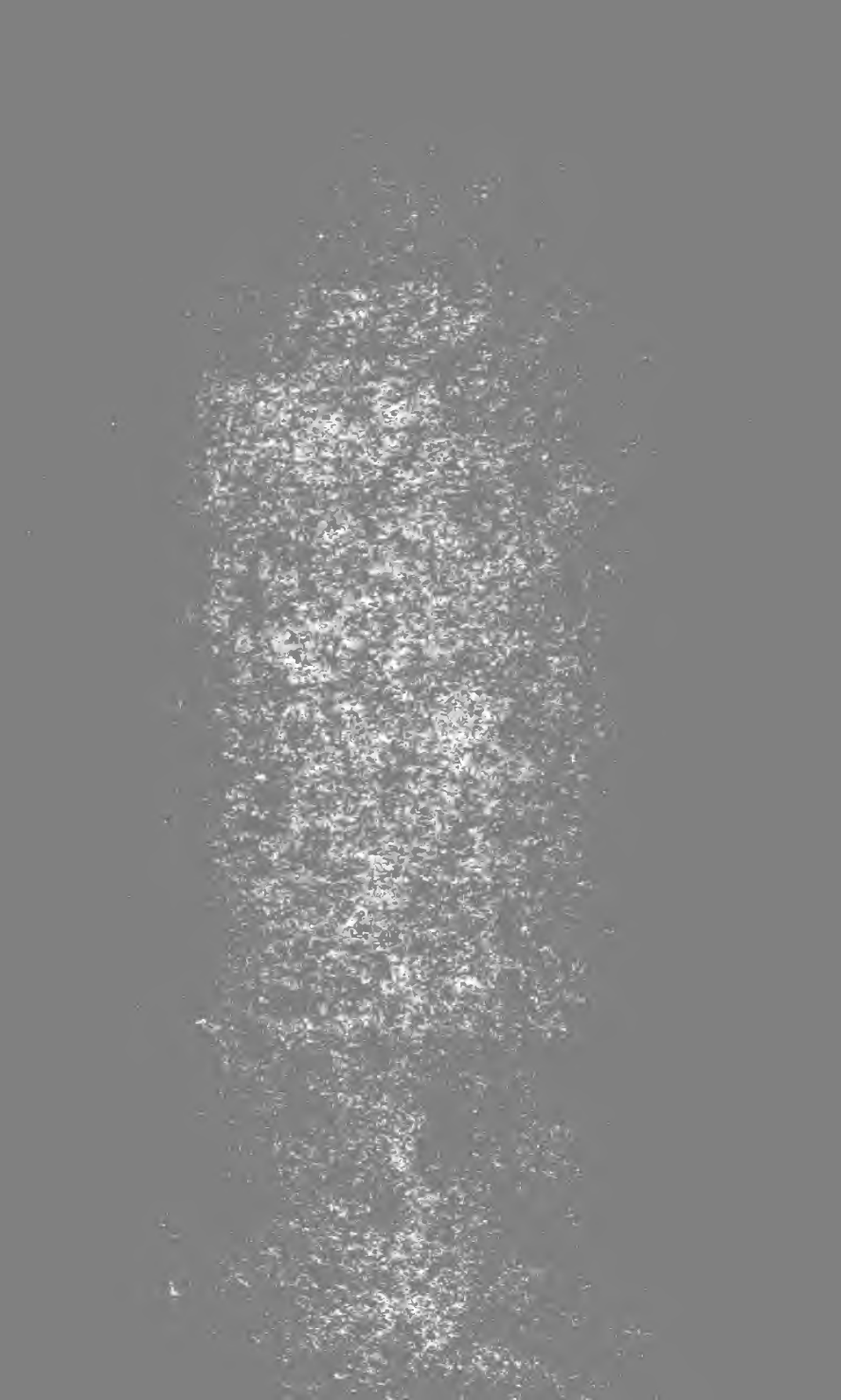
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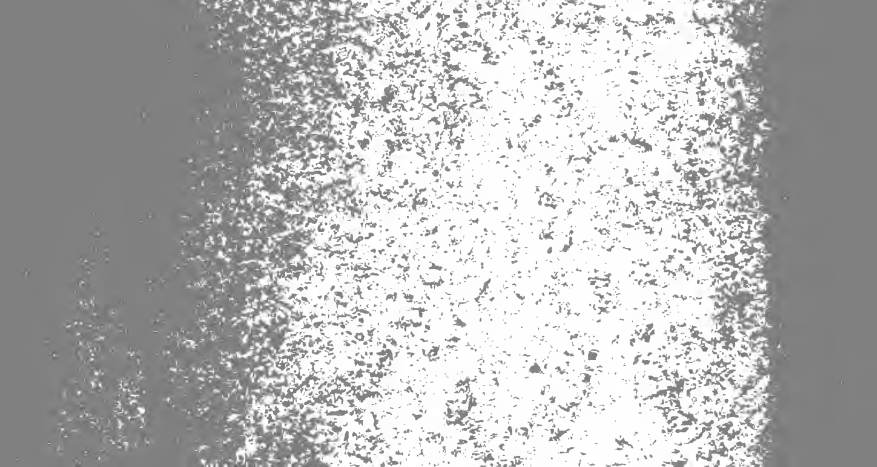
READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY APRIL 29TH, 1903

PHILADELPHIA
MDCCCIII

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THE SHAKSPERE SOCIETY

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CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE OF SHAKESPEARE'S IDENTITY

BY

R. L. ASHHURST
VICE-DEAN

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PHILADELPHIA

MDCCCCIII

At the meeting of the Shakspeare Society held April 29th, 1903, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:—

Resolved: That the paper prepared by the Vice-Dean, entitled *Contemporary Evidence of Shakespeare's Identity*, be printed for the Society.

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CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE

OF

SHAKESPEARE'S IDENTITY

In taking up the question, whether we should revise our opinion that William Shakespeare, born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, was the author of the plays we know as Shakespeare's, it seems to me we should first review the extrinsic evidence on which for the last three centuries the English-speaking world has been satisfied to accept that belief. The Anti-Shakespeareans, Baconians and others, seem to me for the most part to pass by all these primary outside evidences prior to the folio of 1623, and to assume, that the evidence of Shakespeare's authorship of his dramas, is based entirely on Hemmings & Condell's statement. By a hasty assumption of an absolute illiteracy, on the part of the actor at the Curtain and Globe Theatres, on the one hand, and an almost equally rash imputation of nearly universal knowledge and culture, to the author of the dramas on the other, they raise an apparent incongruity which they claim to be insuperable; and thus leave the field open, for the wild dreams and theories of Baconian or syndicate authorship, cypher secrets, and historic mysteries in which they delight. So long as the world holds so many *studentes novarum rerum*, who are ready to accept *omne ignotum pro mirifico*, they will never lack readers and followers.

Study of the intrinsic probability of the actor William Shakespeare, and no one else, being the author of the plays we know, is full of interest, and will, I think, bring the earnest and fair-minded inquirer to the same satisfactory conclusion as the external evidence; but the purpose of this paper is narrower, and it will be limited to the collocation and review of some of the contemporary evidences of Shakespeare being the author of his plays. In contemporaneous evidence I include, however, that of some writers not absolutely synchronous with the poet, but who belonged to the generation immediately succeeding Shakespeare's, and mingled and conversed with his contemporaries and acquaintances. The Anti-Shakespeareans, as I have mentioned, often speak as if little or nothing had been known or heard of William Shakespeare as a poet, or dramatist, prior to the publication of the first folio, but I think the previous thirty years yield us a quantity of facts and information, about him, quite sufficient to support his claim to be the author of his plays, while there is absolutely no indication of any other William Shakespeare than the actor at the Globe being known or heard of. There is no contemporaneous hint or suggestion of a difference in authorship between the plays and poems, or among the plays, except that some title pages indicate that certain plays may not have been wholly from Shakespeare's pen; and no doubt or difficulty is intimated in any contemporaneous writing as to the actor William Shakespeare being the author of the works which even then received a high meed of admiration.

It perhaps would not have been altogether surprising had the origin of the greatest dramas known to literature remained in obscurity. The greatest poet the world ever knew before Shakespeare, lived in an age of barbarism, compared to which life at Stratford in the sixteenth century, was a period of civilization and culture.

It is not claimed that he could read or write, it is even doubtful if in his day, letters had been introduced into his country. Tradition says he was blind, and his birth-place is unknown. Yet the world's greatest epics have come down to us, as the production of the old blind bard Homer, collected centuries afterwards, from the recitations of wandering harpers. It is true some critics have undertaken to divide the Iliad and Odyssey among several hands, and even the more conservative are willing to admit that part at least of the Iliad came from a different source, but still the fact remains that by almost unanimous consensus, nearly all the Odyssey and the finest books of the Iliad, are the composition of a wandering minstrel, born in one of the islands of the Ægean, or one of the Greek cities of Asia Minor, who sang these immortal verses to his harp or lyre, as he journeyed from place to place. These compositions are to this day, the greatest epics poet ever said or sung, and until Shakespeare's dramas were produced, the name of Homer stood beyond rivalry on the roll of poetic fame, and the miracle of his appearance in the Bronze Age, cannot be diminished by any theory of there having been several of him.

In the case, however, of our actor-poet, within a few years after the production on the stage of the earliest of the plays we know as his, they were recognized as the handiwork of an actor about thirty years old, then playing at the Theatre and Curtain, whose name was William Shakespeare and who had come up to London several years previously from Stratford-upon-Avon, and for more than three centuries they have been attributed to him. Let me recapitulate briefly what we know of this William Shakespeare's life, as it is in some respects important in view of contemporary allusion.

We know that he was the son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden and born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. John was the son of Richard Shakespeare, a farmer; his

brother Henry carried on the farm and John drifted into the town. He is variously mentioned as having been a butcher or wool dealer, and a glover. All three statements are probably true. He was doubtless a dealer in cattle and sheep, and their skins and fleeces. He married above his station. Robert Arden, his bride's father, of Wilmecote or Wyncote, was a substantial yeoman, and if not a gentleman technically, stood only just below that rank, and by his will left his daughter a valuable farm and what was a large sum of money for those days. John Shakespeare advanced himself in life after his marriage, and became bailiff, the principal office, corresponding to mayor, of Stratford, and held the position for several years. During Shakespeare's boyhood, therefore, his circumstances were of the most favorable, for that locality, and if he did not have every advantage of education which Stratford possessed, it would be rather remarkable in view of his father's position. Had it not been for his father's misfortunes, there is no reason he should not have gone to an university, as well as Marlowe or Ben Jonson. Some time towards 1580 or a little earlier John Shakespeare fell into pecuniary trouble and was obliged to mortgage the farm inherited from the Ardens, and lost it by not paying the debt when due. This is an important point in discussing the question of the intrinsic evidence of authorship—but that is another story.

William found himself when a growing lad, in the trying position of being a member of a family in declining circumstances, and was obliged to take up life's burdens at an early age, without an opportunity of completing the education he had pretty certainly commenced. It is reported that he worked for his father as a butcher; another tradition says he at one time taught school; both or neither stories may be true. Certain it is he added to the complexity of the situation by marrying at eighteen Ann Hathaway, a woman several years his senior, by

whom he had within two years, three children. It is not remarkable that the youth should have fallen among gay companions, and there is no improbability in his having, as related by tradition, poached on Sir Thomas Lacy's park and killed his deer. The further part of the story, that he was cruelly punished by Sir Thomas as magistrate and avenged himself so bitterly by a lampoon that he had to flee the country, is equally probable.

Certain it is that in 1584 or 1585 he left Stratford and appeared in London, probably in the neighborhood of Shoreditch and Holywell, where the two buildings known as the Theatre and the Curtain, both used for dramatic purposes, then stood. This was quite out in the fields at that time, perhaps half a mile from the city streets, and many of the frequenters of the theatres came on horseback. Tradition relates that when William Shakespeare first came to London he held gentlemen's horses at the Theatre, and being popular as well for his reliability, as his pleasant address, was so much in request that he employed other boys under him for the same purpose, thus developing a profitable business. This story perhaps reminds us a little too much of Whittington, and of Sir Joseph Porter, K. C. B., to command our full credence, but it receives some confirmation from Greene's reference in the passage I will presently discuss, to the Curtain actors as "Rude Groomes." It is also, I believe, a fact, that some of the Burbage family had a livery stable near the Theatre.

From William Shakespeare's disappearance from Stratford about 1584 or 1585, until the appearance of the first quarto edition of "Venus and Adonis" with his name as its author, in 1593, we are without any absolute or direct knowledge of his life or doings; and during the earlier five or six years of this period he is completely lost to our cognizance. He may have visited Italy, Germany, or Denmark, or have given himself to secluded

study for all we know to the contrary. It is not until 1591 and 1592 that we meet with the first hints of his existence, and this not with direct mention of his name but with an indirect punning reference to it.

In 1595 appeared Edmund Spenser's "Colin Clout's Come Home Again," the dedication to which, however, being dated December 27th, 1591, is usually considered to fix the date as of that year, though it is the general opinion of Spenserian critics that some of the stanzas were added between 1592 and 1594. In this poem, which contains complimentary allusions to many of his contemporaries, Spenser says:—

"And then, though last not least is Aetion,
A gentler shepherd may nowhere be found
Whose muse full of high thoughts invention
Doth like himself Heroically sound."

The name "Aetion" is doubtless a derivative of the Greek "Aetos," "an eagle," and indicates the high soaring invention of the poet commemorated. It will be noticed that Spenser speaks of this poet both as a gentle shepherd, indicating some peaceful and probably comic productions, and as an eagle producing high, heroic verses such as would be suggested by his sonorous name. The name of Shakespeare would naturally occur to us as probably meant, and the heroic muse referred to as relating to the commemoration of Talbot in *1 Henry VI.*, which we know acquired early popularity; but the conclusion would not be inevitable but for the savage, punning allusion to Shakespeare's name in Greene's "Groat's Worth of Wit," published in 1592. During the same period in which William Shakespeare came up to London many young men of brilliant ability, and some of them with better educational advantages, had drifted thither, and connected themselves more or less with the stage. Among these were Marlowe, Greene, Lodge, Nash, and Peele, all of whom were, I believe, graduates of Cambridge, and

of whom some were actors. Marlowe, who was unhappily killed in a tavern brawl in 1593, was far the greatest and strongest of the group and was eminent as a lyric poet as well as a dramatist, and his "Hero and Leander" and translations from Ovid, as well as his "Edward II." and "Jew of Malta," had a powerful influence on the mental development of the poet we know as Shakespeare.

Lodge was the author of "Rosalynde," a poem from which the plot of *As You Like It* was taken. Greene himself was the author of the "Tale of Pandosto, or the Triumph of Time, or Dorastus and Fawnia," from which the writer of *Winter's Tale* obtained the plot of his drama; and Marlowe and Greene in collaboration, are believed to have been the authors of a play in two parts, called the *Two-parts of the contention between the houses of York and Lancaster and the true Tragedie of Richard Duke of York*. This play had held the stage for some years before the plays which we know as the last two parts of Shakespeare's *Henry VI.* were produced anonymously at the Theatre and Curtain. The second and third parts of *Henry VI.*, whose titles as originally published in 1594 and 1595 respectively, showed their origin though with much amplification, are largely made up of the older plays, which doubtless contained fine passages in Marlowe's best vein, but the later form included also many additions, which seem to show the hand of the poet whom we have been accustomed to call Shakespeare. The first part of *Henry VI.*, whether or not exactly as we know it, had also been produced anonymously at least as early as 1592, as shown by entries in "Henslow's Diary," and by Nash's allusion in "Pierce Pennilesse" (1592) to "Brave Talbot two hundred years in his tomb again triumphing over the French; and his bones new embalmed in the tears of ten thousand spectators, who in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding."

As is well known, Greene's "Groat's Worth of Wit"

contains in its concluding pages a violent attack on a contemporary actor and dramatist, evidently the author of the last two parts of *Henry VI.*, and almost all critics are satisfied Shakespeare is the person assailed. I confess to me the conclusion is irresistible that the actor, writer, adapter, and corrector of plays referred to is Shakespeare. The earlier part of the pamphlet contains much lamentation over the writer's sins and offenses; then follow addresses to three of the writer's friends, first to one, certainly Marlowe, whom he calls the Gracer of Tragedians, but reproaches with his Atheism, which he urges him to abandon, and two others whom he warmly praises, probably Lodge and Peele. All three he warns against the actors and "puppets speaking from our mouths; anticks garnished in our colours," but particularly one whom he calls "an upstart crow beautified with our feathers."

The address begins:—

"To those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintaince, that spend their wits in making Playes, R. G. wisheth a better exercise, and wisdome to preuent his extremities."

"If wofull experience may mooue you (Gentlemen) to beware, or vnheard wretchednes intreat you to take heed: I doubt not but you will look backe with sorrow, on your time past, and endeuour with repentance to spend that which is to come. Wonder not, (for with thee will I first beginne) thou famous gracer of Tragedians, that Green, who hath said with thee like the foole, in his heart, There is no God, should now give glorie vnto his greatnesse: for penetrating is his power, his hand lyes heauy vpon me, he hath spoken vnto me with a voyce of thunder, and I haue left, (felt) he is a God that can punish enemies. Why should thy excellent wit, his gift be so blinded, that thou shouldest giue no glory to the Giuer?"

* * * * *

"With thee I ioyne young Juuenall, that byting Satyr-ist, that lastly with mee together writ a Comedie. Sweet

Boy, might I aduise thee, be aduised, and get not many enemies by bitter words: * * *

“And thou no lesse deseruing then the other two, in some things rarer, in nothing inferiour, driun (as myselfe) to extreame shifts, a little haue I to say to thee: and were it not an idolatrous oath, I would sweare by sweet S. George, thou are vnworthy better hap, sith thou dependest on so meane a stay. Base minded men all three of you, if by my misery yee bee not warned: for vnto none of you (like me) sought those burs to cleaue; those Puppits (I meane) that speake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange that I to whome they all haue bin beholding: is it not like that you, to whom they all haue bin beholding, shall (were yee in that case that I am now) be both, of them at once forsaken? Yea trust them not: for there is an vpstart Crow beautified with our Feathers, that with his Tygres heart wrapt in a Players hyde, supposes hee is as well able to bombast out a Blanke verse, as the best of you: and beeing an absolute Iohannes fac totum, is in his owne conceyt the onely Shake-scene in a Countrey. Oh that I might in-treat your rare wittes to bee imployed in more profitable courses: and let these Apes imitate your past Excellence, and neuer more acquaynt them with your admyred Inuentions. I knowe the best husband of you all will neuer prooue an Usurer, and the kindest of them all will neuer prooue a kinde Nurse: yet whilst you may, seeke you better Maisters: for it is a pittie men of such rare wits should be subject to the pleasures of such rude groomes.

“In this I might insert two more, that both haue writte against these buckram Gentlemen: but let their owne worke serue to witnesse against theyr owne wickednesse, if they perseuer to maintaine any more such peasants. For other new commers, I leaue them to the mercie of these painted monsters, who (I doubt

not) will drive the best minded to despise them: for the rest, it skills not though they make a ieast at them."

To my mind it is absolutely clear this must refer to Shakespeare. First, it is to be noticed the person principally attacked is accused of plagiarism—he is an upstart; that is, a newcomer to the stage, an actor who claimed and set up to be a dramatic writer and to write blank verse as well as Marlowe, Greene himself, or the other two, whether Lodge and Peele or who, matters not. Further, this upstart plagiarist, beautified with other's feathers, is an absolute Johannes factotum, that is, Jack-of-all-trades; just as some modern critics undertake to find in Shakespeare's writings a familiarity with all human knowledge, so great, that he must be not one man, but a syndicate. Then in his own conceit he is the only "Shake-scene in the countrie." Is there any doubt this is a pun on the name Shakespeare, "speare" being changed to "scene" because he is an actor? Is not this punning reference viewed in connection with the mention of the heroically-sounding name by Spenser, conclusive evidence that the actor Shakespeare was meant? But if any doubt could remain, it is removed by his giving to this "upstart crow" a "Tyger's heart wrapt in a player's hide." This is an evident parody on the line in 3 *Henry VI.*, I. iv., 137, spoken by York: "O, tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide."]

This line is found in the quarto of 1595, the title page of which recites it had been sundry times acted, and we know the drama had been played as early as 1591, and was exceedingly popular. We also know that the earlier form of this play was attributed to Marlowe and Greene. Is it not transparent that the attributing to the "upstart crow," the "Johannes factotum," the only "Shake-scene," of "*a tyger's heart wrapped in a player's hide*," was because Greene meant to accuse the player Shakes-

peare of stealing his and Marlowe's play, and this whether this particular line was Shakespeare's or Marlowe's, though I think the implication is that the line was Shakespeare's, being as it is, part of one of the splendid purple patches in *Henry VI.* of which not even Marlowe was quite capable.

There may also, I think, be a fling at Shakespeare's rural origin, and possible employment in holding horses, at the theatre door, in the characterization of the actors as peasants and rude grooms. In any event, the spiteful hostility of the reference makes its evidence all the stronger. I may remark parenthetically that this violent attack on Shakespeare's personal character, is the only hostile reference to the man, we find in all the literature of the period, while there are many passages praising his honesty, kindness, and gentleness. Perhaps Greene may not have personally known Shakespeare, for there seems to have been something in his personal presence and manner which disarmed hostility and won affection. Greene's indignation was not without excuse. The laws of literary property were in a chaotic condition in those days, but it would seem that the ownership of plays produced was, according to usage at least, vested in the proprietors of the theatre. Greene in his Apologue does not deny this, but for this reason, and for the ill use the theatre owners were likely to make of their property, advised his comrades to turn their talents in other directions, where they could retain control over the children of their brain. Having this absolute property in the manuscripts of the dramas produced, the theatre owners seem to have been within their legal rights, in having plays altered and rewritten to please the popular taste; and a young actor from the country, with facile pen and not specially linked to the dramatists thus dealt with, by ties of co-education or association, was a likely person to be selected for the purpose. We cannot,

however, be surprised that the playwrights thus written over and upon, should feel themselves wronged, though they had no legal ground of complaint, nor that they should visit their wrath on the youthful writer, who was doing his best to please his patrons. At a later period, as seems to be shown by a passage from Davies, to which particular reference will be made later, Shakespeare's friends noted with surprise his quiet acquiescence in the appropriation of his own dramas, and their absorption in the general theatre stock.

After Greene's death appeared a poem called "Greene's Funerall," printed in 1594, the author calling himself "R. B. Gent," who wrote:—

"Greene is the pleasing Object of an eie:
 Greene pleasse the eies of all that lookt upon him.
 Green is the ground of every painter's die;
 Green gave the ground to all that wrote upon him,
 Nay more the men that so eclipt his fame,
 Purloynde his plumes, can they deny the same."

Greene's friend therefore after his death repeats the accusation of plagiarism against those who wrote upon him, that is, as I understand, rewrote or recast his productions. The Apologue was published about September, 1592, soon after Greene's death, by one Chettle; three months later, in the same year, viz., December 8th, 1592, Chettle produced a pamphlet called "Kindhart's Dream," in which he apologizes for having printed this attack, of which he disclaims the composition.

In his sketch Chettle wrote:—

"Ile shew reason for my present writing * * *. About three months since died M. Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry Booke sellers hands, among other his Groatsworth of wit, in which a letter written to divers playmakers, is offensively by one or two of them taken; and because on the dead they cannot be avenged, they

wilfully forge in their conceites a living Author, and after tossing it to and fro, no remedy, but it must light on me.

* * * With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be; the other whome at that time I did not so much spare, as since I wish I had, for that as I have moderated the heate of living writers, and might have used my own discretion (especially in such a case) the Author beeing dead, that I did not I am as sory, as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because my selfe have seene his demeanor, no lesse civill than he exelent in the qualitie he professes: Besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writting, that aprooves his Art."

Greene could only be said to attack two persons in his Apologue—the Atheist "Gracer of Tragedians," Marlowe, whom he rather rebuked and admonished for his irreligion than attacked, for he lauds him to the skies for all else, and the actor whom he denounces as a plagiarist, an upstart crow beautified with stolen feathers, an anticke ape, a Johannes factotum, and as wrapping a "tyger's hearte in a player's hide." It is to this second party that Chettle's apology is evidently addressed. He recognized that the party attacked was not a conceited upstart, but of civil demeanor. He was a good actor, excellent in his quality. He was not a thief, strutting in borrowed plumes, but an honest man, upright in his dealings. He had a facetious grace in writing, and was a good playwright as well as an actor, and was esteemed by worthy people. Have we not here direct and competent evidence that in 1592, William Shakespeare the actor was a man, who while not without enemies, was known and esteemed by reputable people, who also thought well of writings they believed to be his?

In the next year, 1593, William Shakespeare's name first appeared in print. In the Stationers' Register, under date of April 18th, Richard Field entered a book called "Venus and Adonis." Now, Richard Field was a Stratford man, the son of one Henry Field, of Stratford, a tanner. Richard came up to London in 1579 and was apprenticed to a printer. He took up his freedom in 1587 and soon commenced business on his own account, but apparently only in a small way. Later in the year 1593 appeared "Venus and Adonis," London, imprinted by Richard Field, and to be sold at the sign of the White Grey Hound in Paul's Church Yard. There would certainly be no more likely publisher of the poet-actor's first work than his fellow-townsmen, and probably school companion, older perhaps, by a few years. The fact is also not without significance, that John Shakespeare, whose circumstances had apparently improved a little; and who had always been able to keep his house on the village street, was in 1592 one of the appraisers of the goods of Henry Field (Richard's father), who died in August, 1592. Neither the copyright entry, nor the title page of the book, contained the author's name, but on the page following, appears a letter of dedication to the Right Honorable Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, whose name was destined to be in later years, so frequently connected with that of the actor-poet. This dedication is signed William Shakespeare; it speaks of this poem as the first "heire" of the writer's invention, and would seem to imply that there was no previous acquaintance between him and Southampton, then a youth of twenty, who had already shown a marked literary taste and a sympathy for authors.

It has been contended that as "Venus and Adonis" is here spoken of as the first heir of the author's invention, it must have been written many years before, and perhaps have been brought up from Stratford to Lon-

don, because these critics assume that the poet we know as Shakespeare was already the author of numerous plays. But of this there is no adequate evidence and the difficulty is self made. What the poet had done as far as we know up to this time, had been only the repolishing, correction, and improvement of old plays, such as *Henry VI.*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Taming of the Shrew*, possibly *Love's Labor Lost*. There is no evidence of anything that he himself would properly call invention, so that there is no ground for thinking "Venus and Adonis" may not have been written in 1592 or 1593, when Shakespeare was twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old, and had been probably eight years at least away from Stratford. The poem won immediate favor and popularity. Richard Field brought out a second edition in 1594; on the 25th of June, 1594, he assigned the copyright to Mr. Harrison, Sr., who brought out a third edition, printed by R. F. for John Harrison in 1596.

Harrison was the first publisher of the "Ravyshment of Lucrece," which was entered in the Stationers' Registry May 9th, 1594, and printed later in the year by Richard Field for John Harrison. "Lucrece" also bore no author's name, but was dedicated by the writer, William Shakespeare, to the Earl of Southampton. The Earl certainly had appreciated "Venus and Adonis," for this second dedication thanks him for his encouragement: "The warrant I have of your Honourable Disposition," &c.

Harrison was no doubt a stronger publisher, with more capital than Richard Field, but the printing was left in the hands of the poet's early friend.

"Lucrece" was as successful as "Venus and Adonis," and numerous editions of both were produced during the ensuing years. "The Rape of Lucrece" is highly praised in the commendatory verses prefixed to a little book called "Willobie his Avisa," which was published in the

same year 1594, and Shakespeare is named as the author :—

“In Lavine Land though Livie bost
 There hath beene seene a Constant dame:
 Though Rome lament that she have lost
 The Gareland of her rarest fame,
 Yet now we see, that here is found,
 As great a Faith in English ground.

“Though Collatine have deerely bought,
 To high renowne, a lasting life,
 And found, that most in vaine have fought,
 To have a Faire and Constant wife,
 Yet Tarquyne pluckt his glistening grape,
 And Shake-speare, paints poore Lucrece rape.”

Willobie, whose personality is a little doubtful, is said to have been a native of Wiltshire, born in 1574, who graduated from Exeter College, Oxford, in 1594; he therefore would seem to have just come up from Oxford at the age of twenty when his book was produced in September, 1594. He is said to have gone abroad on her Majesty's service and died in 1596.

But this little book of Henry Willobie contains another probable allusion which may have even greater interest. Cantos 44 to 47 of the poem, inclusive, are occupied by a dialogue between Willobie himself under the initials “H. W.,” and an older friend, “W. S.,” whom he speaks of in the preface as an old player of whom the new actor seeks counsel, and “W. S.” proceeds to advise “H. W.” very ingeniously as to the prosecution of his suit to Avis. It will be noted that it was one “W. H.” to whom the sonnets were dedicated, a younger friend of the poet, while here a younger man “H. W.,” styling himself “Henrico Willobego-Hispalensis,” addresses the older “W. S.” as his “familiar friend who had tryed the curtesy of the like passion and was now nearly recovered,” and this familiar friend is clearly an actor and a man experienced in love. Without undertaking to

trace "H. W." with certainty, it is certainly a highly plausible conjecture that Shakespeare, who had been mentioned in the prefixed commendatory verses and whose published poems were distinctly amatory in character, may have been the "W. S." meant. In the same year 1594 Michael Drayton, the well-known contemporary poet, mentions the revival of the "Legend of Lucrece." Drayton certainly knew Shakespeare, for in his collected poems (edition of 1627), Shakespeare's comic vein is praised as well as his tragic rage; the verses also, I think, contain a distinct allusion to the poet having been an actor:—

"Shakespeare thou hadst as smooth a comicke vaine
Fitting the sock, and in thy natural brain
As strong conception, and as clear a rage,
As any one that trafiqued with the stage."

This citation is somewhat out of time, but it is better to anticipate so as to collocate it with the same writer's earlier reference in 1594. I may add that Drayton's reputation for truth and integrity was very high.

In the next year, 1595, in his little book, "Polimantcia," William Clarke, in his appreciation of various writers, ancient and modern, puts in the margin of his page, "All praise worthy Lucretia," "Sweet Shakespeare," and later in the same marginal column, "Wanton Adonis." Perhaps the place in the margin was due to the then very recent publication of the poems. Following Lucrece's name is that of "Gaviston," the famous poem of Michael Drayton, to whom we have just referred. In 1596 Richard Carew, in his "Excellence of the English Tongue," compares Shakespeare to Catullus.

Meanwhile *Titus Andronicus* and the first part of the *Contention between the Houses of York and Lancaster* had been published in 1594. The name of Shakespeare did not appear, however, either in the copyright entries or the title pages.

This was also the case with the quarto of the *True Tragedie of Richard Duke of York*, which appeared in 1595. The editions of *Romeo and Juliet*, published in 1596, and of *Richard II. and III.*, published in 1597, lacked also the author's name.

Notwithstanding the omission, the Shakespearean authorship of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III.* at least seems to have been early recognized, probably before they were printed at all.

John Weever, in his little book called "Epigrammes in the Oldest Cut and Newest Fashion," published in 1599, has a sonnet addressed "Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare," which greets him as the author not only of *Venus and Adonis*, but of *Romeo* and *Richard* and other poems, and urges him to beget more such lovely literary children. Weever says that these poems of his were written by him before he reached twenty: "that twenty twelve months yet did never know." From the known age of his birth this must have been not later than 1596, and this epigram or sonnet, which is not without beauty, seems therefore fairly attributable to about that time:—

"Honie-tong'd Shakespeare, when I saw thine issue,
 I swore Apollo got them and none other,
 Their rosie-tainted features cloth'd in tissue,
 Some heaven born goddesse said to be their mother;
 Rose-checkt Adonis with his amber tresses, (cheeked)
 Faire fire-hot Venus charming him to love her,
 Chaste Lucretia virgine-like her dresses,
 Prowd lust-stung Tarquine seeking still to prove her:
 Romea-Richard; more, whose names I know not, (Romeo)
 Their sugred tongues, and power attractive beuty
 Say they are Saints, although that Sts they shew not
 For thousands voves to them subjective dutie:
 They burn in love thy childre Shakespear het the, (heated)
 Go, wo thy Muse more Nymphish brood beget them."

Weever's sonnet seems to show that Shakespeare was recognized as the author not only of "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece," but *Romeo and Juliet*, and at

least one of the Richards, at the time of their production on the stage, and further, I think, shows a fine critical appreciation of the fiery heat, with which Shakespeare's creation of his characters was accomplished. Weever was also the author of the "Mirror for Martyrs, or the Life and Death of Sir John Oldcastle 1602," which indicates a possible connection between him and Shakespeare. It was one of the books written to vindicate Oldcastle from the character given him in the first version of *Henry IV.*, where he originally took the place of Falstaff. In this book of poems we also find admiring reference to the play we know as Shakespeare's, *Julius Cæsar*, with which Weever was evidently familiar.

The first occasion where Shakespeare's name appears on the title page of one of the plays, is in the quarto of *Love's Labor Lost*, "a pleasant conceited Comedie as it was presented before her Highness last Christmas. Newly corrected and augmented by William Shakespeare." The date of this publication is 1598, so it was doubtless played Christmas, 1597. The title page shows it was an old play, and possibly, also indicates that Shakespeare did not claim to be the original author, but only to be its corrector and augments. In the same year Francis Meres produced his "Palladis Tamia," or "Wit's Treasury," being the second part of "Wit's Commonwealth." In this book Meres speaks of Shakespeare and his writings no less than five times. In the most celebrated passage, after comparing other contemporary writers to classic Greek and Latin prototypes, he proceeds to praise Shakespeare for his poems, in which he declares the sweet, witty soul of Ovid lives; for his comedies, which he compares to those of Plautus and Seneca, and also for his tragedies. This is the passage:—

"As the foule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras; so the sweete wittie foule of Ovid lives in

mellifluous & Hony-tongued Shakespeare, witnes his Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, his sugred Sonnets among his private friends, &c.

"As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines so Shakespeare among ye English, is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, witnes his Gentlemen of Verona, his Love labors lost, his Love labours wonne, his Midsummers night dreame & his Merchant of Venice: for Tragedy his Richard the 2, Richard the 3, Henry the 4. King Iohn, Titus Andronicus and his Romeo and Iuliet.

"As Epilus Stolo said, that the Muses would speake with Plautus Tongue, if they would speak Latin; so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakespears fine filed phrase, if they would speak English."

Meres was but little younger than Shakespeare, having been born in Kenton, Lincolnshire, 1565. He received his Bachelor's degree at Cambridge, 1587, and proceeded Master of Arts, 1591. He then seems to have gone to Oxford, where also he received a Master's degree, 1593, thus coming within the radius of Shakespearean recognition, for William Shakespeare the actor was, according to tradition, well known in Oxford, which he passed through on his trips between London and Stratford, while we have no knowledge of his being personally known in Cambridge. In 1597 Meres was settled in London, living in St. Botolph's Lane, and describing himself as Master of Arts of both universities, and student of divinity, but giving much attention to English literature. He seems to have resided in London until 1602, when he received the living of Wing, in Rutlandshire, where he spent the rest of his long life, surviving until 1647. His stay in Oxford, and subsequent literary life in London, gave him the opportunity of knowing all there was to be known, about the actor Shakespeare in 1598.

We observe he mentions among the comedies, besides *Love's Labor Lost*; *The Gentlemen of Verona*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Midsummer's Night Dream*, and the *Merchant of Venice*, none of which had been printed at all up to that time, and which must, therefore, have been known as Shakespeare's as acted on the stage; and *Love's Labor Won*, a play which has either been lost or is known by another name, perhaps *As You Like It*, or *All's Well that Ends Well*, or, more likely than any other, *The Taming of the Shrew*. Among tragedies he mentions *King John*, which was not printed until 1611, besides *Richard II. and III.*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, previously published anonymously, and *Henry IV.*, which was first published in the same year, but had been produced on the stage a year or two earlier. It is also interesting to note the first reference in literature to the sonnets (which were not published until 1609). Meres speaks of them as his "sugred sonnets among his private friends." This shows a distinctly personal circulation, from hand to hand, among persons who knew the author and each other, and to my mind contradicts the possibility of their having been by another hand, who borrowed Shakespeare's name. In concluding the reference to Meres, let us note his appreciation of Shakespeare's style, his "fine filed phrase which the Muses would use if they spoke English." Certainly in the society of a little city like London then was, a writer like Meres, who knew and stated the reputed authorship, of so many of the plays which were not yet published, and who knew of the private circulation of the sonnets attributed to the actor Shakespeare, (which had the same honied sweetness as his recognized poems, dedicated to one of these friends, the brilliant young Southampton), would certainly have been aware of the fact, if it had been a fact, that the actor's personality and lack of education, were such, as to present an incongruity in his being

the master of the fine filed phrase Meres lauded so highly.

In the same year 1598 Richard Bamfield, in his poems in "Divers Humors" (it was a year remarkable for humors), commemorates Shakespeare as the author of "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece," together with Spenser, Daniell, and Drayton, and prophesies eternal fame to their productions.

About the same year, or possibly a year or two later, Gabriel Harvey made the celebrated note in manuscript in a copy of Specht's Horace, published in 1598. Unhappily, the volume containing this note, which both Steevens and Malone examined, was destroyed by fire with the rest of Bishop Percy's library in the burning of Northumberland House. The note reads: "The younger sort take much delight in Shakespeare's Venus & Adonis, but his Lucrece and his tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark have it in them to please the wiser sort."

"Venus and Adonis" was treated and classed as distinctly an erotic book in those days, as shown by many allusions to its secret perusal by youth of both sexes, and Shakespeare was gravely reprehended by strict moralists for its license; but it is interesting to find "Lucrece" distinguished from its companion and classed as a moral poem, with "Hamlet." It is also interesting to see that Harvey accepted "Hamlet" as undoubtedly by the same author as the poems.

In this same year 1598 appeared John Marston's well-known "Scourge of Villainie." Two of the "satyres," the seventh and tenth, seem to contain references to Shakespeare and his productions. The passage in the seventh seems to burlesque both *Richard III.* and *Timon of Athens*:—

"A man, a man, a kingdom for a man
Why how now currish mad Athenian
Thou cynick dogge, see'st not the streets do swarm
With men."

It might be supposed the allusion was only to Diogenes, but that the phrase, "mad Athenian," would seem to imply a reference to Timon. If this conjecture is sound, there must have been an earlier production, of some form of the play, than any of which we have record. But the reference in the tenth satire is much more interesting. It begins:—

"A hall, a hall,
Roome for the Spheres, the Orbes celestial
Will daunce Kemps Jigge. They'le revel with neate iumps
A worthy Poet hath put on their Pumps.

* * * * *

Luscus, what's played to day? faith now I know
I set thy lips abroach, from whence doth flow
Naught but pure Iuliet and Romio.
Say, who acts best? Drusus or Roscio?
Now I have him, that nere of ought did speake
But when of playes or Plaiers he did treat.
H'ath made a common-place booke out of plaies,
And speaks in print at least what ere he says
Is warranted by Curtaine plaudeties."

Besides the opening quotation from *Romeo and Juliet*, and the distinct reference to that play, we have the allusion to Roscius and another actor, Drusus. There seems also to me, at least an intimation of a connection between the writing and acting of *Romeo and Juliet*, and a certainty that Marston was quite familiar with the circumstances of the production of that tragedy. The language is indeed obscure, but is there not a relation implied between the worthy poet who put on the pumps of the "orbes celestial" in order that they might dance "Kempe's jigge" and Drusus and Roscius? The worthy poet is, I think, evidently the author of *Romeo and Juliet*, produced at the Curtain. In 1604, we find Marston in a later poem copying a passage from *Hamlet*, and in 1607 one from *Richard III.* in his "What You Will."

It is interesting to collate the references made to

Shakespeare by John Marston with those made a year or two later by John Davies, of Hereford. This gentleman, a writing master by occupation, was living at Magdalen College, Oxford, during the first years of the seventeenth century. I have remarked on Marston's mention in connection with *Romeo and Juliet*, of two actors besides Kempe—Roscio and Drusus—and Marston asks his interlocutor which is the better of these two. We know with reasonable certainty that in the literature of the day Roscio always meant Burbage, but we have no other allusion that I know of to Drusus as an actor; but in view of the constant association of Burbage and Shakespeare, and Kempe having been already named, it is at least probable that Shakespeare may be meant both by Drusus, and as the putter on of the pumps for the dancing orbs. And this conjecture is, I think, vastly strengthened when we find Davies in his "Microcosmus," 1603, addressing the players, particularly praising two, both for their intellectual and moral merits, whom he designates in the margin of his notes as "R. B." or "W. S.," and adding as a final note the remark that Roscius was said for his excellence in his quality, to be only worthie to come on the stage, and for his honesty to be more worthy than to come on it. His Roscius, equivalent to Roscio is clearly "R. B.," or Richard Burbage, while Shakespeare's initials alone are given without any reference to any stage name, so that if Marston meant Drusus (who probably played Mercutio to Burbage's Romeo) for Shakespeare, the nickname did not last like Roscius did for Burbage. The lines are as follows:—

- "Players, I love yee, and your Qualitie,
 c As ye are Men, that pass time not abus'd:
 d And some I love for painting, poesie,
 And say fell Fortune cannot be excus'd,
 That hath for better uses you refus'd:
 Wit, Courage, good shape, good partes, and all good,
 As long as all these goods are no worse us'd,
 And though the stage doth staine pure gentle blood,
 Yet generous yee are in minde and moode."

The marginal notes are to line 2 the initials "R. B. W. S." (evidently meaning Richard Burbage and William Shakespeare), and to line 3: "Simonides saith that painting is a dumb poesy & poesy a speaking painting."

Davies here, as will be seen, fully recognized the loss of social position which the profession of an actor involved, but excepts from the common condemnation two actors, "R. B." and "W. S.," whom he says he loves, and whom he praises as not only eminent in their profession as actors, but who had made good use of their leisure hours in the cultivation of the arts, the one of painting and the other of poetry, and who possessed also the natural advantages of wit, courage, good shape, good parts, and the noble moral trait of generosity in mind and disposition. He blames fortune for having placed such noble natures in so unfortunate a situation.

Burbage was almost as well known in those days as a painter as Shakespeare in ours as a poet. This is proved as well by frequent references by contemporaries as by pictures by his hand still extant. There is therefore not the slightest doubt that Burbage and Shakespeare are the actors referred to and that Shakespeare is the actor-poet praised by John Davies.

I have elsewhere discussed in greater detail this old writing teacher, the most skillful penman of his day, and his probable relation to Shakespeare, so I will only briefly allude to his career and writings. A native of Hereford, a town lying westward of Stratford and closer to the Welsh border, so that his route to London, like Shakespeare's, lay through Oxford—he was four years Shakespeare's junior and survived him about two years.

Davies seems to have halted on his way to London and to have tarried at Oxford for about ten years ending in 1608, when he received the living of St. Dunstan's the Less, and from that time until his death in 1618 lived in

St. Martin's Lane, near that church. There is no record of his graduation at Oxford, but Wood says he was educated there, and Burkitt in 1635 calles him Oxoniæ Vates. One of his poems was an address to the University, which he styled his "honoured and entirely beloved Patronesse," and two of his sonnets are in praise of Magdalen College.] He certainly resided at Magdalen for many years, during which he remained unmarried, and this fact, coupled with that of his marriage immediately on receiving the living of St. Dunstan's, would look as if he were a fellow of that College.

He was the most renowned penman of the day and taught the art of writing to the nobility and gentry of both sexes.] Among his patrons and pupils were Prince Henry of Wales (Charles I's elder brother), Shakespeare's patron William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and his family, Edmund Herbert of Montgomery, afterwards Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Sir Robert Sidney, the Earl of Northumberland, and his daughters, Ladies Dorothy and Mary Percy, and the Countess of Derby and her daughters.]

Davies appears to have been a worthy and respectable person, of a studious and industrious disposition, who assiduously cultivated the patronage of the rich and great, by whose aid he eked out rather a narrow livelihood until he received the living of St. Dunstan's.

] We know *Hamlet* was acted in Oxford very early in the seventeenth century by the Globe Company, and that Shakespeare often stopped at Oxford on his way between London and Stratford.] Davenant's inn, The Crown, where Shakespeare stopped, was a very respectable place of entertainment, as well as one noted for the excellence of its cellar, and John Davenant was a reputable citizen of grave demeanor and serious character. His inn was therefore a place, where] Davies might very well meet, and become well acquainted with Shakespeare and

have

Burbage, and in *Hamlet* he had the opportunity of seeing Burbage as the Prince of Denmark, and Shakespeare as his father's spirit. When, therefore, Davies tells us that both these actors were men too good for their calling, and eminent, apart from their merits as actors, the one for his painting, the other for his poesy, he doubtless knew whereof he spoke, and we have abundant evidence, that he was entirely right as to Burbage being an artist. Why should we hesitate to accept the facts which he states about Shakespeare, that he was not only an excellent actor, but a poet, a gentleman, and a scholar, handsome in person, witty, generous, and courageous in character?

Eminent as he was as a penman and writing master, it could hardly have escaped Davies' notice, if Shakespeare had been a vulgar, uneducated clown hardly able to write his name. He could have had no motive for falsehood or exaggeration, in praise of one belonging to the despised calling of an actor; on the contrary, situated as he was, dependent on the patronage of the great and noble, and particularly of noble ladies and their daughters, he would hardly have ventured on such praise of "R. B." and "W S." unless he felt he was putting in print what his noble patrons agreed with, and would read with pleasure, so that the opinion of the public which Davies addressed, and which he probably reflected, is more important evidence for us than even his own view. Nor was this expression of Davies, in his "Microcosm," a mere passing sentiment based on a hasty impulse; it was his matured and settled conviction. Two years later, in 1605, this voluminous writer published his "Civil Wars of Death and Fortune." We find in this poem another eight-line stanza in which Davies is particularly occupied in condemning the ill deeds and rude behavior of certain actors; but he was most careful to except from this censure his two old friends, Burbage and Shakespeare,

whom he again distinguishes by their initials "R. B." and "W. S." in the margin:—

" Some followed her by acting all mens parts,
 These on a Stage she rais'd (in scorne)-to fall:
 And made them Mirrors, by their acting Arts,
 Wherin men saw their faults, though ne'r so small:
 "W.S. R.B." Yet some she guerdond not, to their desarts;
 But, othersome, were ill-Actioned all.
 Who while they acted ill, ill staid behinde,
 (By custome of their maners) in their minde."

" Stage plaiers
 Showing the vices of the time."

It is somewhat curious to note Davies' close connection of the moral qualities of the players with the merits of their performance, but the great interest of the passage is in its demonstration of his sincere regard for Burbage and Shakespeare, whom he could not let it be supposed were included in his condemnation. I think also no one can doubt that the writer of this stanza was quite familiar with *Hamlet's* advice to the players, and the holding of a mirror up to nature.

Still later, and after he was settled in London as parson of St. Dunstan's, Davies produced in 1611 the "Scourge of Folly, consisting of Satyricall epigrams. and others in honour, of many noble and worthy persons in our land." In this collection are included epigrams and stanzas addressed to Daniel, Ben Jonson, Marston, Fletcher, and other well-known contemporary writers. Among these we find another eight-line stanza addressed "to our English Terence Mr. Will Shakespeare." The address is interesting as showing that it referred to the dramatist Shakespeare, whom Meres had twelve years previously compared to Terence, while the abbreviation "Will" necessarily suggests to us certain of the sonnets, and implies personal intimacy. This is confirmed by the

first line, in which Shakespeare is called, as will be seen, "Good Will." Here is the epigram:—

81.6
 "Some say (good Will) which I, in sport, do sing,
 Had'st thou not plaid some Kingly parts in sport,
 Thou hadst bin a companion for a King;
 And, beene a King among the meaner sort.
 Some others raile; but, raile as they thinke fit,
 Thou hast no rayling, but, a rainging Wit:
 And honesty thou sow'st, which they do reape;
 So, to increase their stocke which they do keepe."

This stanza is not easy of interpretation. We have first a renewed recognition of the social inferiority, resulting from Shakespeare's being a player, deplored in the earlier poems, which prevented his taking the place to which his merits would else have entitled him, of a companion of kings and a king among other folks; and a regret that his very playing of certain kingly parts had rendered this impossible. It has occurred to me that we may learn from this that Shakespeare may perhaps have played Richard II. or other kingly parts which directly tended to blight his personal career. Then the epigrammatist distinguishes Shakespeare's lambent, happy humor, which he compliments as reigning wit, from the railing wit of his contemporaries (probably Ben Jonson), which he condemns. But the two last lines are the most difficult.

Davies compliments Shakespeare's honesty, of which, however, others reap the fruit so as to increase their store. What could it be Shakespeare sowed except the product of his brain, which he honestly surrendered, according to the law and custom of the time, to the proprietors of the Theatre, who appropriated it to augment their store of dramas? Thus Shakespeare honestly forbearing to try to print his plays for his personal benefit, failed to reap the benefit either to purse or reputation he otherwise would, while the Theatre proprietors held the plays fast only to increase their stock. If my interpretation

of these lines is correct, Davies, the poet-actor's friend, noted at the time what has been the subject of so much comment since, of Shakespeare's apparent carelessness as to the manuscript, &c., of the plays, and attributes it to Shakespeare's honesty and the grasping covetousness of the proprietors of the Theatre.

Turning back from 1611, to which year we had followed John Davies so as to pursue the continuity of his testimony, we find that in the first year of the new century, 1601 Robert Chester published his allegorical poem which he called "Love's Martyr," to which he added several, or, as he called them, "Divers Poetical Epistles on the former subject; (viz. the Turtle and Phenix) done by the best and chiefest of our modern writers, with their names subscribed to their particular works." The first of these poems is subscribed "*Vatum Chorus*," and is attributed to Ben Jonson; the second is stated to be by an unknown author; the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth are subscribed respectively with the names of Shakespeare, Marston, Chapman, and Ben Jonson. Shakespeare's contribution to the series is the poem we know as the "Phenix and Turtle."

Such a collection of poems by different authors was perhaps less usual in those days than it would be at present, but it has in it nothing surprising, if we accept the fact that Shakespeare, Marston, Chapman, and Ben Jonson were the best known poets of the day, to whom recourse by Chester to brighten and deck out his book was natural; but it would be a very startling thing, if there was no poet Shakespeare, but only an ignorant actor, that Chester should include him in his "*Vatum Chorus*," and it is hard to imagine, how Chester could succeed in getting a contribution to his volume, out of the unknown and hidden author, who is claimed to have masqueraded behind the name of Shakespeare, or how the other three well-known poets could be satisfied to be linked with a mere simulacrum.

That the "Phenix and Turtle" is written by the same hand that wrote "Venus and Adonis," the "Rape of Lucrece," and the sonnets is reasonably clear; further, the intention of the production appears to have been distinctly political. It is set out as being "consecrated by them all to the noble knight Sir John Salisburie," who like Chester himself and Shakespeare's patron, Southampton, was deep in the Essex Plot. Therefore, if we accept Shakespeare as the author of his own poems and plays, his joining in Chester's enterprise was quite natural; but it would be strange company for Bacon, one of Elizabeth's most trusted and apparently devoted counsellors.

In 1603 Queen Elizabeth died. Not a poem, a stanza, or a line by Shakespeare, lamenting her death, or celebrating her glorious reign, appeared. Contemporary literature is full of appeals to Shakespeare to properly remember the occasion in verse, but he remained obstinately silent. This was most natural for the devoted follower and friend of Essex and Southampton, trembling perhaps each hour while the Queen lived, lest he should be called to account for Richard II.; but how can we account for Bacon's silence under such circumstances? Even if he found praising his dead mistress might not be pleasing to her successor, the well-kept secret of his pseudonym would have enabled him without danger, to have described the glories of the great Queen's reign and lamented her death. In his own person he wrote the well known Latin encomium on his dead mistress, though it was not published until later.

In 1605 was published a play called the *Return from Parnassus*, by an unknown author, evidently, however, a Cambridge man. This play had been acted at Cambridge a year or two earlier. In the early portion of this drama complimentary reference is made to Shakespeare as the author of "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece," but later, in the fourth act, is a more important reference. [In the

course of the drama certain of the students send to London for Burbage and Kempe, two of the Globe Company, to instruct them in the art of acting, and a dialogue occurs between these actors in which, after some clever skits at amateur actors, Kempe says, "Few of the University pen plays well * * * . Why here's our fellow Shakespeare puts them all down; aye, and Ben Jonson too. O, that Ben Jonson is a pestilente fellow. He brought up Horace giving the poets a pill; but our fellow Shakespeare hath given him a purge that made him bewray his credit." To which Burbage answers, "It's a shrewd fellow indeed." As I have elsewhere argued, this passage shows that even at Cambridge it was recognized that the players wrote better acting plays than the University men, and that William Shakespeare, the fellow-actor of Burbage and Kempe, was recognized as the best playwright of the day, while regarded by the actors as strictly their fellow, which Ben Jonson had ceased to be. Ben Jonson's attack on the poets and actors in the "Poetaster" is evidently alluded to, in the reference to Horace giving the poets a pill, but the meaning of the purge, which Shakespeare is stated to have given to Ben Jonson, is more obscure; the most plausible seems to me to be the suggestion that Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* was understood to be a caricature of Jonson. Severe as the satire might seem to be, it is yet laid on with a not unloving hand, and there appears a recognition of Malvolio's essential worth, notwithstanding his absurdities. Still later in this play we find one of the actors at Burbage's desire reciting a passage from *Richard III*.

In 1604 appeared Antony Scolloker's "Daiphantus; or, the Passions of Love." In his preface, telling us what an epistle to the reader should be, Scolloker writes: "It should be like the Never-too-well read Arcadia, where the Prose and verce (Matters and Words) are like his Mistresses eyes, one still excelling another and without Co-

rivall: or to come home to the vulgars Element, like Friendly Shakespeare's Tragedies, where the Commedien rides, when the Tragedian stands on tip-toe: Faith it should please all, like Prince Hamlet."

It is a singular fact, showing on how small a chance the perpetuation of knowledge of a past age depends, that but one copy of this book was extant until it was reprinted by the Roxburgh Club in 1818. The original copy is in the Bodleian.

We gather from this reference, first, that he whom Scolloker calls "Friendly Shakespeare" was rather the idol of the multitude than of the cultivated classes, but that his moral traits of friendship, gentleness, and honesty were universally recognized. No one can doubt but that the "Friendly Shakespeare" of Scolloker, "our fellow Shakespeare" of the *Return from Parnassus*, and Davies' "Good Will Shakespeare" referred to the same lovable personality. Second, this passage shows that though our poet was usually the vulgar's element, that is popular with the masses, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* pleased all, according with the view expressed by Gabriel Harvey in his manuscript note, that *Hamlet* pleased the wiser sort, and further confirmed by the fact that *Hamlet* is the only one of the plays, mentioned on the quarto title pages, as having been acted at the universities. Scolloker's allusion to the introduction of the comic element by Shakespeare even into his tragedies is interesting; it was probably one of the modes whereby he pleased all.

Let us next take up Thomas Heywood, a dramatist of much power, contemporary with Shakespeare's later years, and whose *Woman Killed With Kindness* is one of the best plays of the age.

It will be recalled that Francis Meres spoke in 1598 of Shakespeare's "sugred" sonnets to his private friends. The sonnets were not published until 1609, but in 1597 that piratical publisher, William Jaggard, published

the "Passionate Pilgrim," including in the publication several sonnets, some of Shakespeare's and some by other writers, but describing all as Shakespeare's. In 1612 Jaggard reprinted the "Pilgrim" and sundry other songs, and included two poems of Heywood, the Charming Epistles of "Paris to Helen" and "Helen to Paris," calling all Shakespeare's. This excited the indignation of both Heywood and Shakespeare. The circumstances are related by Heywood in the "Epistle to the Printer," at the end of "An Apology for Actors." The kindly manner in which Heywood speaks of Shakespeare's innocence of Jaggard's theft is interesting as showing how Shakespeare's honesty was by this time generally recognized. "As I must acknowledge my lines not worthy his patronage, under whom he hath published them, so the Author I know much offended with Mr. Jaggard, that (altogether unknown to him) presumed to make bold with his name." Certainly it would have been a surprise to Heywood to be told Shakespeare was not the author of any of these poems.

We have an earlier reference by Heywood to "Venus and Adonis" in 1607, and in 1635, nineteen years after Shakespeare's death, Heywood makes this affectionate allusion to Will Shakespeare in his "Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels":

"Mellifluous Shakespeare whose enchanting quill
Commanded Mirth or Passion, was but Will."

Can it be supposed that Heywood during these many years could have been ignorant of the fact, had it been a fact, that Will Shakespeare was not the author of "Venus and Adonis," or the sonnets, or the plays, but only a figurehead?

To go back a little; from 1598, when *Love's Labor Lost* was first printed in quarto form with Shakespeare's name on the title page, down to the actor-poet's death

in 1616, there appeared bearing William Shakespeare's name on the title page, thirty-one editions of fourteen of the plays we now know as Shakespeare's, in quarto form: *Love's Labor Lost*, *Richard II.*, *Richard III.*, 1 and 2 *Henry IV.*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Of these *Richard II.* and *Richard III.*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and the two parts of *Henry IV.* had been issued without an author's name, several times before the later quartos, bearing William Shakespeare's name, appeared; while in the case of five plays, *Titus Andronicus*, *Henry V.*, and the three parts of *Henry VI.*, none of the quartos bear William Shakespeare's name.

Both *Titus Andronicus*, and the *True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, (the old name of 3 *Henry VI.*), were stated on the title pages, to have been acted by the Earl of Pembroke's servants. William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, whom we know as Shakespeare's patron and one of the sponsors for the first folio was, of course too young at this time to have exercised any active patronage, so that the company was probably under the traditional protection of the family. While *Henry V.*, was published anonymously, it was declared to be by the same author, in the Epilogue to 2 *Henry IV.*, which was published with Shakespeare's name; the continued anonymous publication is probably to be accounted for by the fact that the later quartos were virtually merely reprints of the earlier ones. The rapid increase of the number of editions shows Shakespeare's growing popularity, which is also confirmed by the appearance of three of the doubtful or rejected plays with Shakespeare's name on their title pages. These were *Sir John Oldcastle*, *the Good Lord Cobham*, 1600; *The London Prodigall*, 1605; and *The Yorkshire Tragedy*, 1608. The latter is much

the most meritorious of these plays and has much sombre force; but there is no reason to believe either of them Shakespeare's. The publication of the last two under his name was probably merely for the sake of popularity; but that of *Sir John Oldcastle* involves a curious story. It is known both by contemporaneous remark, and by internal vestiges which revision failed to remove, that in the original *Henry IV.* as first played, Falstaff was called Sir John Oldcastle, following the play of the famous victories on which it was founded. To his apparent surprise the author found he had stirred up a hornets' nest. Oldcastle, who had been a follower of Wickliffe, was regarded as a Protestant champion, and the feeling became so strong that the author we call Shakespeare was compelled to change the name, which he did with completeness, except in two or three places; and in the Epilogue to *2 Henry IV.* he made a formal withdrawal, when promising to show Falstaff in the French wars, he adds: "For Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man." In the same year with the publication of the quarto of *2 Henry IV.*, but probably a year after its production on the stage, appeared this play of *Sir John Oldcastle*, attributed on its title page to Shakespeare and stated to have been acted by the Earl of Nottingham's (the Lord High Admiral) servants. The play is rather flat and of little merit, and written from an extreme Puritan standpoint. Oldcastle is made a wise and grave knight, Prince Henry's better genius and counsellor, and disparaging allusions are made to Falstaff, who is not introduced, but the fun, so-called, is given to a deboshed knight, who is also a kind of hedge priest, called Sir John of Wrotham.

Nothing can be clearer than that Shakespeare, or the poet we call by that name, had nothing to do with the composition of this play; but it certainly looks as if his permitting this very indifferent drama, with whose sentiments he had no sympathy, to be published in his

name, was part of the *amende honorable* the author was obliged to make to the friends and partisans of Lord Cobham; and Shakespeare's name had hardly yet, in 1600, when but four or five quartos bearing his name had appeared, obtained such popularity as to make a forgery worth while.

These quarto editions frequently contain in the title a species of index to the action of the play. Thus, the first edition of *1 Henry IV.* has this title: "True Historie of Henrie the Fourth; with the battell at Shrewsburie between the King and Lord Henrie Percie, surnamed Henry Hotspur, of the North: with the Humor of Sir John Falstaffe." The first edition of the *Merchant* on its title page reads: "The Excellent history of the Merchant of Venice; with the extreme Cruelty of Shylocke the Jew towards the said Merchant, in cutting a just pound of his flesh. And the obtaining of Portia by the choyse of three caskets."

The object of this was, of course, to attract purchasers, by reminding them, of what they had seen and enjoyed upon the stage. The title also usually contained a mention, of where and by whose servants the play had been acted. Among these title pages that of the *Merry Wives* is interesting, both for its full description of the characters, and for its statement confirming the tradition of its having been acted before Queen Elizabeth: "A Most Pleasant and Conceited Comedie of Sir John Falstaffe, and the Merrie Wives of Windsor, entermixed with Sundrie Variable and Pleasing Humours of Syr Hugh the Welch Knight, Justice Shallow and his wise cousin, M. Slender, With the Swaggering Vanitee of Ancient Pistoll and Corporall Nym. By William Shakespeare. As it hath been at divers times Acted by the Right Honourable my Lord Chamberlaine's Servants, both before her Majestie, and elsewhere."

So the title page to the first and second quartos of *King Lear* is interesting as well for its brief analysis of

the play, as for its mention of its production before King James. It is also peculiar in putting the author's name at the top: "Mr. William Shakespeare, His true Chronicle History of the life and death of King Lear and his three Daughters. With the unfortunate life of Edgar, sonne and heir to the Earl of Glocester, and his sullen and assumed humour of Tom of Bedlam, as it was played before the King's Majesty at Whitehall, uppon S. Stephen's Night, in Christmas Holidayes. By his Majestie's Servants, playing usually at the Globe on the Banck-side."

The title page of the first quarto of *Hamlet* is valuable for its recital, as above referred to, of the tragedy having been acted at the universities: "The Tragical Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke. By William Shakespeare. As it hath been divers time acted by his Highnesse servants in the Citie of London: as also in the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elsewhere."

But perhaps the most instructive of all these quarto editions is the first of two editions of *Troilus and Cressida* published in 1609. Some, but not all, of the copies of this quarto contain an address which is worthy of attention.

This is headed "A Never Writer to an Ever Reader, News." It praises the author's comedies generally, and after saying the play now published is equal to the best comedy of Plautus or Terence, adds, that when the author is gone and his comedies out of sale, "you will scramble for them and set up a new English Inquisition." This address is also remarkable for containing the statement that *Troilus and Cressida* is by the author of "Venus and Adonis" (which poem is mentioned in the margin) and contains the same salt of wit as was born in that sea that brought forth "Venus."

The same year 1609 was distinguished by the publication of the sonnets for the first time, though they had been, as stated by Meres, in private circulation for eleven years

past. The title pages show how well known the sonnets already were, for they were entitled simply "Shakespeare's Sonnets. Never before imprinted." Two editions appeared in this year with the well-known dedication to "Mr. W. H." Now, whether this was William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, or Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, or some one else, is not important, both these nobles were undoubtedly Shakespeare's patrons, and some of his plays were first acted by the troupe known as the Earl of Pembroke's servants.

Edmund Bolton, a gentleman connected with the Duke of Buckingham for many years, a free commoner at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and who is said to have lived in the best and choicest company of gentlemen, and whom Ritson described as "a professor and scholar," wrote a short treatise he called "Hypercritica; or, Rules of Judgment for Writing or Reading our Histories," of which Antony Wood fixes the date in 1610, but which was probably written a few years later, and remained in manuscript until 1722. He there gives a short list of writers who should be studied for the choice of what he calls warrantable English. This list includes: Sir Thomas More, the 1st Seven books of Chapman's Iliad, Samuel Daniell, Michael Drayton's Heroical Epistles, Marlowe's "Hero and Leander," Shakespeare and Mr. Francis Beaumont's plays.

Of the last two he remarks, that they press tenderly to be used. It is rather remarkable that Bolton did not mention Ben Jonson, and refers only to Marlowe's "Hero and Leander" and not his tragedies.

In the dedication to his great tragedy *The White Devil*, published in quarto in 1612, John Webster mentions among his fellows and contemporaries whom he sincerely admires, Shakespeare, whom he classes with Chapman, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Decker and Heywood, and compliments on his right happy and copious industry. He includes Shakespeare with his

other fellows and contemporaries, simply as one of them, putting him no higher or lower than the others. We may be surprised at Webster's not recognizing Shakespeare's superiority to, or difference from the others, but the argument for his known identity is all the stronger from this circumstance.

Sir William Drummond, often spoken of as "Drummond of Hawthornden," a gentleman of elegant tastes and a fondness for literature, makes three references to Shakespeare in those of his writings which have come down to us. He was personally acquainted with Ben Jonson, who visited him at Hawthornden in 1619. So far as we know, Drummond's knowledge of Shakespeare as a writer began in 1606. He kept for some years memoranda of the books he read. During 1606, when he was in London, he read according to his list: "*Romeo and Juliet*, tragedie (1597-1599); *Loves Labors Lost*, comedie (1598); *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599); *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594, 1598, 1600); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, comedie (1605)."

The dates of the editions read, follow the names of the plays, &c., and it would appear that Drummond, whose taste lay rather toward the poetry of love, purchased two copies of *Romeo and Juliet* and three of *Lucrece*. He does not give the name of the author in this list of 1606, but of the quarto editions he mentions, all but those of *Romeo and Juliet* bore Shakespeare's name. In the following year he went abroad, remaining away until 1609. In 1611 he resumed his Shakespearean readings and read, as appears from his "Table of my English bookes anno 1611": "*Venus and Adon*, by Schaksp. (6th and 7th ed. 1602). *The Rape of Lucrece*, *idem* (two eds. in 1607). *The Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet* (4d Ing). *A Midsummer Night's Dreame*."

He must have lost some of his books while he was away and been obliged to buy new copies: It is interesting to know he paid but fourpence for his new copy

of *Romeo and Juliet*. In his writings some years later, perhaps between 1614 and 1616, occurs a note in which he says: "The authors I have seen on the subject of Love are the Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt (whom because of their antiquity I will not match with our latter times), Sidney, Daniel Drayton and Spenser. * * * The last we have had are Sir William Alexander and Shakespeare, who have lately published their works." The works of Shakespeare he alludes to are doubtless the love poems and dramas he had read in 1606 and 1611. Some years later, in 1619, three years after Shakespeare's death, Ben Jonson paid his celebrated visit to Hawthornden.

Drummond seems to have made a careful record of the opinions Jonson expressed with regard to contemporary authors, and mentions that he said of Shakespeare that he lacked "arte," giving as an evidence or illustration of it, the fact that in a play, he "brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, wher is no sea neer by some 100 miles." The allusion is, of course, to *Winter's Tale*, which of course Drummond had not read, as it was never published in quarto, and as Drummond does not seem to have been a theatre-goer, it was very likely new to him. The criticism that Shakespeare lacked art was quite in Jonson's line of thought and in accordance with his views expressed *De Shakespeare Nostrati* in his "Timber." But the illustration given, rather argues geographical ignorance, and imperfect education, than lack of art, and makes us suspect that Drummond's record of the conversation is imperfect. But that the conversation was about the actor-poet, William Shakespeare, whom Jonson had been intimately associated with, and Drummond knew by his poems and comedies relating to love, and that neither Jonson nor Drummond had any suspicion or doubt of his identity, seems absolutely clear.

My next witness is [Thomas Freeman, who in the

second book of his, "Runne and a Great Caste," published 1614, has a sonnet to Master W. Shakespeare which is as follows:—

"Shakespeare, that nimble Mercury thy braine,
 Lulls many hundred Argus-eyes asleepe,
 So fit, for all thou fashionest thy vaine,
 At th' horse foote fountaine thou hast drunk full deepe,
 Vertues or vices theame to the all one is:
 "Who loves chaste life, there's Lucrece for a teacher,
 Who list read lust, there's Venus and Adonis,
 True Modell of a most lascivious leatcher.
 "Besides in plaies thy wit windes like Meander :
 Whence needy new-composers borrow more
 Then Terence doth from Plautus or Menander :
 But to praise thee aright I want thy store :
 Then let thine owne works thine owne worth upraise,
 And help t' adorne thee with deserved Baies."

This poem is rather remarkable as conveying almost the first words of adverse criticism since Greene's attack in 1592. This is directed only to the moral tendency of some of Shakespeare's works, and blames him for his apparent indifference to the moral or immoral lessons his poems impart. The marvelous activity of the poet's brain and the depth of his poetic inspiration are fully recognized, as is also the identity of the authorship of the plays and poems.

The allusion to Shakespeare in Edmund Howes' continuation of Stow's Annals, 1615, is brief but interesting. Howes says, speaking of Queen Elizabeth's reign and its literature: "Our moderne and presant excellent poets which worthily flourish in their own workes, and all of them in my own knowledge, lived together in this Queen's raigne. According to their priorities, as near as I could, I have orderly set down: George Gascoigne, Esquire;
 * * * Edmund Spenser, Esquire; Sir Philip Sidney, Knight * * * Sir Francis Bacon, Knight; * * * Master John Lillie, gentleman; Master George Chapman, gentleman; M. W. Warner, gentleman; M. Willi Shakespeare, gentleman; Samuel Daniell, Esquire; Michael Drayton, Esquire; * * * M. Benjamin Johnson,

gentleman. * * *

Here this very respectable writer, continuing a standard chronicle of the time, asserts on his personal knowledge Shakespeare's life with his fellows as a recognized poet, excellent and worthily flourishing with them, and despite his lowly origin gives him the title of gentleman, which the Stratford actor struggled so hard to obtain, and, like Davies and Heywood, calls him affectionately by his abbreviated name.

After Shakespeare's death in 1616 and before the publication of the first folio in 1623, the most important piece of testimony is the sonnet or epitaph which was printed among Donne's collected poems in 1633, but which the preponderance of evidence indicates was the composition of William Basse and not later in date than 1622. Several copies in manuscript are extant—one, perhaps the original, subscribed by William Basse himself. There is considerable variation between the different copies, but the same general thought and spirit are preserved in all. It is clearly alluded to by Ben Jonson in his introductory poem prefixed to the folio. The selection of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Spenser, and Beaumont as England's four greatest poets is interesting, and the last lines clearly show that William Shakespeare was not the least of the four in the writer's view:—

“ON MR. WM. SHAKESPEARE, HE DYED IN APRIL 1616.

“Renowned Spencer lye a thought more nye
 To learned Chaucer, and rare Beaumont lye
 A little neerer Spenser to make roome
 For Shakespeare in your threefold, fowerfold Tombe.
 To lodge all fowre in one bed make a shift
 Vntill Doomesdaye, for hardly will a fift
 Betwixt this day and that, by Fate be slayne,
 For whom your Curtaines may be drawn againe.
 If your precedency in death doth barre
 A fourth place in your sacred sepulcher,
 Vnder this carued marble of thine owne
 Sleepe, rare Tragoedian, Shakespeare, sleep alone ;
 Possesse as Lord, not Tenant, of thy Graue,
 That vnto us and others it may be
 Honor hereafter to be layde by thee.”

In Donne's collection

1633

W. Basse

1622

Donne

This discussion has brought us down to 1622, the year before the publication of the first folio by Hemmings and Condell. The Anti-Shakespereans often treat this production, its preface, dedication, and the accompanying poems by Ben Jonson and others, as the first and only substantial evidence in favor of Shakespeare being the author of the dramas we know as his, and have therefore directed their heaviest artillery against it, and have endeavored to convict not only Hemmings and Condell of deliberate imposture, but to make rare Ben Jonson out a party to the fraud, for even Baconians recognize that Jonson must have known the facts.

Besides the two well-known poems by Ben Jonson, Hemmings and Condell prefixed to the folio two prose letters of dedication, one to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery and the other to the "Great Variety of Readers," and three commendatory poems, one by Leonard Digges, one by Hugh Holland, and the third by "J. M."—and a list of the original actors' names including those of Shakespeare, Burbage, and Kempe. The first folio included all the recognized plays except *Pericles Prince of Tyre*; but *Troilus and Cressida*, though imprinted between the histories and the tragedies, is not included in the prefatory catalogue, of plays; and it would seem as if the inclusion of this drama, which, as we have seen, was printed in Shakespeare's lifetime with express commendatory mention of its being by the author of "Venus and Adonis," had not been included in the original plan of publication, for it is for the most part without pagination, and the page numbers given to the first two or three pages would seem to indicate an intention to have inserted it between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Timon*. The manner of its insertion and paging would argue that Hemmings and Condell did not acquire possession of *Troilus and Cressida* until their book was already in type, and had to thrust it in awkwardly, as best they could.

*fallows and
furnish debt
out*

The two dedications are very important. The first is to the "Most noble and incomparable pair of brethren William Earle of Pembroke, &c., Lord Chamberlaine, and Philip Earl of Montgomery, &c., both Knights of the Garter."

The first of these nobles we have known already as William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, a steady patron of Shakespeare's, and under whose name the Curtain and the Globe Companies were sheltered, as shown by imprints of several quartos between 1594 and 1600. Both Pembroke and Montgomery were patrons of Shakespeare's friend, John Davies of Hereford, the writing master. The dedication recites and relies on the friendliness shown to Shakespeare in his lifetime by the two noble brothers:—

"But since your L.L. have been pleas'd to think these trifles something, heretofore ; and have prosecuted both them and their author, living, with so much favour ; we hope that they outliving him * * * you will use the like indulgence toward them, you have done unto their parent." It will be observed that here is a distinct assertion that the earls had admired these plays and favored their actor-author in his lifetime. This statement and introduction was never repudiated by the earls, but, apparently, graciously accepted. The compilers go on to say:—

"For so much were your L.L. likings of the several parts, when they were acted, as before they were published the Volume asked to be yours. We have but collected them, &c. * * * to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend & Fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare, by humble offer of his playes to your noble patronage." 7

Can it be conceived that Hemmings and Condell would have had the audacity to say this, if it were not true? Would not the earls if it were false, have repudiated their alleged liking of the acted plays, and favor to the editors' 2

friend and fellow? What motive could these great nobles have had to acquiesce in and countenance this sham if it were all an imposture? Neither of them had any special relation of kindness or affection to Bacon. The Earl of Pembroke, then Lord Chamberlain, was one of his judges, as was also Shakespeare's other great patron, the Earl of Southampton,. Pembroke was not so violent against Bacon at the trial as Southampton was, but preserved a judicial dignity and impartiality of manner, and maintained the middle view as to his condemnation and sentence, which the court adopted. Bacon, in his correspondence, speaks rather slightly of Pembroke, but with the highest admiration of Montgomery. In 1623 Bacon had already fallen, and none were so poor as to do him reverence. He had lost every position of honor, and only a lingering remnant of the King's favor saved him from suffering not only disgrace but the imprisonment to which he had been sentenced; he was also at this time very necessitous and earnestly seeking aid from the crown. Is it not a patent absurdity to suppose, that such noblemen would consent to this use of their names, to sustain a conscious lie to gratify the fallen Chancellor?

In conclusion the compilers say: "We most humbly consecrate to your H. H. these remains of your servant Shakespeare; that what delight is in them may be ever your L.L. the reputation his and the faults ours," &c., &c. To my mind the genuineness and sincerity of this dedication is transparent, and the affection and admiration of the compilers for their worthy friend and fellow is so simply and naturally expressed as to be beyond the reach of contrivance. Who can doubt that their worthy friend and fellow, Shakespeare, was the "friendly Shakespeare" of Antony Scolloker; Thomas Heywood's and John Davies' "Good Will Shakespeare"; "our fellow Shakespeare" of the *Return from Parnassus*; the "worthy poet" of John Marston?

The "Second Dedication to the Great Variety of Readers" is as frank and natural, though in quite a different vein. It is this second introduction which contains the celebrated description of Shakespeare's manner of composition: "Who as he was a happie imitator of Nature was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together; and what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." 1 This description, though far from pleasing to Ben Jonson, widely differing as it did from his own labored manner of composition, corresponds to the white heat at which Weever describes Shakespeare as producing the children of his imagination.

Some of the Anti-Shakespeareans contend that the publication of Shakespeare's dramas in so sumptuous a form in 1623 and the printing of a second edition so soon as 1632, but nine years later, shows that there must have been some powerful support behind the publication. I have argued Bacon could not have furnished such support; but further, we know in 1616 Ben Jonson had brought out his plays in as handsome a form, and we find Mr. Pryne—certainly not a friendly witness—in 1632, the year of the publication of the second folio, commenting with great indignation on their rapid, successful sale. He says: "Some Play-books since I first undertooke the subject, are growne from Quarto into Folio, which yet bear so good a price and sale, that I cannot but with grieve relate it, they are now new" (meaning, of course, that the first edition being sold off, a *new* one had been brought out), and referring distinctly in the margin to Ben Jonson and "Schackspere" as the writers alluded to. Of "Schackspere" he particularly complains that his plays are printed on the best crown paper, better than that used for Bibles, "which hardly have such vent as they." So out of the

Excer

mouth of the enemy we have shown that Hemmings and Condell's was a fair business adventure, to which they were encouraged by Jonson's success with his folio, and one which was amply justified by the result, the rapid sale of the first requiring the publication of a second edition.

Besides the personal statements of the editors Hemmings and Condell, the first folio contains words of commendation by several contemporary poets who were certainly in a position to know whereof they spoke and who had in all probability known Shakespeare, then but seven years dead. These were Hugh Holland, Leonard Digges, "J. M.," who may have been John Marston, but was more likely Jasper Mayne or James Mabbe, and last but most important, Ben Jonson himself, who of course knew Shakespeare well. Ben Jonson we must pass over for the present, so as to treat his testimony about Shakespeare as a whole, but the others are not without weight and importance. Both Holland and "J. M." lament Shakespeare's early death, and predict an immortality to his plays contrasted with the brief term of the author's life:—

"For though his line of life went soon about,
The life yet of his lines shall never out."

Holland's sonnet is entitled, "Upon the Lines and Life of the Famous Scenicke Poet Master William Shakespeare," and from its form and expression would seem to have been written rather as a dirge immediately after Shakespeare's death than with an immediate view to the publication of his works. "J. M.," on the other hand, writes with immediate reference to the folio publication:—

"We thought thee dead, but this thy printed worth
Tells thy Spectators, that thou wents't but forth
To enter with applause."

All "J. M.'s" poem shows that Shakespeare is in his mind as an actor as well as a player, and Holland's has a distinct reference to the Globe Theatre, as well as the familiar theatrical comparison of Death, to a tiring house, or actor's dressing room.

Leonard Digges' poem is longer, and the most interesting, except Jonson's. Digges we know was born in 1588; he had therefore in his early days been a contemporary of Shakespeare, and he addresses him as a pupil or scholar might a deceased admired teacher.

The poem is to the "Memorie of the deceased Authour Maister W. Shakespeare." He begins with apparent surprise that the works of this admired poet had not been produced sooner:—

"Shakespeare at length thy pious fellows give
The world thy Workes."

He alludes to the monument at Stratford, and says when time shall have dissolved it, "Here we alive shall view thee still;" predicts immortality to his fame, until something better is written than the "passions of Juliet and her Romeo," or a scene more nobly taken "than when thy half-sword parleying Romans spake."

The quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius had made a deep impression on Digges, for we will find him again expressing a deep admiration for it in a longer commemorative poem upon Master William Shakespeare, the deceased author, and his poems. The date of this poem is uncertain; it was not published until 1640, after Digges' death, which occurred in 1635. It would seem to me probable that the verses were written not many years, however, after 1623. In this poem Digges displays a distinct feeling against Ben Jonson. He contradicts Jonson as to Shakespeare's manner of composition, confirming Weever, and Hemmings and Condell as to Shakespeare's ease and facility of composition, and contrasts

Digges
the universal popularity of Shakespeare's plays on the stage, with the empty houses which oft greeted Ben Jonson's labored dramas. [He opens with, "Poets are borne, not made," in direct contradiction of Jonson's "A good poet's made, as well as borne." He attributes to Shakespeare "Art without Art unparalleled as yet." He says, "Nature only helpt him;" contrasts him with others in declaring him free from borrowed plumage, from Greek, Latin, or contemporary "vulgar coarseness," and from plagiarism. He alludes to both the Globe and Black Friars as scenes of Shakespeare's triumphs, which he proceeds to rehearse, and contrast with learned Ben Jonson's limited success:—

"So have I seene when Cæsar would appeare
And on the stage at half sword parley were,
Brutus and Cassius: oh how the Audience
Were ravished, with what wonder they went thence
When some new day they would not brooke a line
Of tedious (though well laboured) Catiline.
Sejanus too was irksome, they priz'de more
Honest Iago or the jealous Moore."

Further
While praising *The Fox and the Alchymist*, yet Digges says that sometimes, when acted at special request, the receipts would hardly pay for the fire and doorkeepers. On the other hand:—

"When let but Falstaffe come,
Hall, Poines, the rest you scarce shall have a room,
All is so pestered; let but Beatrice
And Benedicke be seen, loe in a trice
The Cock-pit, Galleries, Boxes all are full
To hear Malvoglio that cross-gartered Gull."

Leonard Digges was manifestly a constant frequenter of the Theatre, both during Shakespeare's life and later. His verses seem to show familiarity with the Globe Theatre, which was burned in 1611, as well as the Black Friars.

He thought he knew Shakespeare's style and manner of composition, and was quite disposed to fall out with Jonson—whom he evidently did not like—about it, and to maintain against Jonson, that the divinely gifted poet needed not the patient drudgery, which Jonson deemed necessary to real success. [Digges also shows his familiarity with the fact, that the poet he loved and honored, was the actor buried at Stratford, and that he knew of the monument there.] The marked disagreement between him and Ben Jonson, makes their testimony the more conclusive, when it coincides as it does, on the essential question of the identity, of the actor and the poet.

The remaining testimony annexed to the folio is that of rare Ben Jonson himself. His rugged, forceful personality, is one of the most conspicuous marks, in the literary history of the first half of the seventeenth century, and we know more about him, than about almost any other writer of that time. That he knew all about Shakespeare, both as a man and a poet, can hardly be questioned, and the school of writers who in these days find his testimony like a lion in their path, are driven to assail, not the competency, but the credibility of the witness, and impute to him either the bias of a corrupt bargain with Hemmings and Condell, whereby he sold his encomium on Shakespeare for gold, knowing it to be false; or to a slavish admiration and reverence for Bacon's lofty position and talents, which induced him to become knowingly a party to the great imposture, for the purpose of preserving Bacon's secret. How Hemmings and Condell could raise a sufficient sum, to purchase the honesty of the poet laureate and first literary man of the day; or how Bacon, ruined and disgraced, long hated by the commons, and now condemned and forsaken of the lords, sentenced to fines he could not pay, and saving a bare pittance of his former wealth, by the irregularly exercised favor of the King and the favorite, could help

to influence Ben Jonson to listen to the blandishments of the players who were trying to keep alive the memory of their dead fellow, is not explained.

Without relying on the tradition of Shakespeare's early befriending Jonson, and procuring him an opportunity of reaching the stage, we know that Shakespeare and Jonson were in a position of friendly acquaintance in 1598, for in that year *Every Man in His Humour*, Jonson's first successful comedy, was produced at the Globe, where Shakespeare's voice and influence were strong, and that Shakespeare played a leading part in that comedy on its first production, probably "Knowell," the first part, since Shakespeare's name appears at the head of the first column of the list of the original players, in the folio of 1616, printed under Jonson's own supervision. This certainly shows a friendly relation between the older actor and the young playwright, and some esteem entertained by the latter for the former, since from what we know of Jonson, he never would have intrusted so important a part in his new comedy, to an actor he did not believe to be educated and competent; and the success of the comedy, which was marked, shows it was well played.

It was a few years later, but before his relations to Shakespeare's company had been dissolved, that Jonson produced his great tragedy, *The Fall of Sejanus*. We know that William Shakespeare played one of the leading parts in that play on its production, for his name appears at the top of the second column of the list of actors' names, the name of Burbage appearing at the head of the first column, Lowin and Hemmings and Condell also being in the cast. As usual, we have no record of what part he took, but in that severe and classic tragedy, none of the leading parts could have been given to an incompetent or uneducated actor. Tradition gives Shakespeare a still further relation to *Sejanus*, and re-

lates him to have been the author of at least one scene in the tragedy. As in this review, however, we are not dealing with anything but written evidence, no matter how much credence we might well attach to a long stage tradition, we must look elsewhere for confirmation of the story.

We know that there was a scene in the original version written, not by Jonson, but by a friend. When Jonson had broken away from the Globe and Shakespeare's company, he altered his tragedy of *Sejanus*, as he himself tells us in his preface, by striking out the portion written by another hand and inserting a substituted scene or scenes of his own composition. We have no knowledge as to what were the scene or scenes thus changed, and Jonson does not tell us who was the friend who originally supplied this portion of his tragedy, but his language on the subject of the change, particularly his allusion to the "Happy Genius" to whom he admits his original indebtedness, would seem to suggest that Shakespeare, whose ease and facility of composition always excited his criticism, is intended to be referred to. Certainly his exaggerated praise of the cancelled scenes and excessive depreciation of his own work in comparison, would seem to imply something of a sneer.

The belief that Shakespeare was the author of this suppressed passage in *Sejanus* is, I think, strongly confirmed by Leonard Digges' language in the poem to which I have referred above. Digges, as mentioned, takes up the cudgels violently in Shakespeare's behalf, as against a supposed disparagement of him by Jonson or Jonson's friends. After asserting Shakespeare to be a born, not a made poet, in contradiction of all Jonson's theories, and contending that his plays should not be called "works," as it was no work to Shakespeare to write them, evidently reflecting on Jonson, who published his plays in 1616 as his works, Digges goes on:

Digges
ex 9
'Next Nature only helpt him, for look thorow
This whole booke, thou shalt find he doth not borrow
One phrase from Greeke, nor Latin imitate,
Nor once from Vulgar Language translate.
Nor plagiari like from others gleane,
Nor begges he from each witty friend a scene,
To piece his acts with, all that he doth write
Is pure his owne, plot, language exquisite."

This praise of Shakespeare by Digges we may not think in all respects justified, but I do not think we can doubt, particularly in view of what precedes and follows, that it is Ben Jonson with whom he contrasts Shakespeare, and that it is Ben Jonson whom he alludes to as begging scenes from his witty friends, and it is hard not to believe that Digges intended to refer Jonson's borrowing a part of the original *Sejanus* from the "Happy Genius" whom he mentions in his preface, and to intimate that Shakespeare was the witty friend who had helped to piece out his barren invention.

[During the years ensuing Jonson's break with the Globe Theatre and its management, his plays were full of attacks on many of his old companions, and also abounded with sneers and derogatory allusions at and about Shakespeare's dramas; but there are not to be found any reflections or disparagement of Shakespeare personally. His criticism of Shakespeare's art, made to Drummond in 1619, which has been above mentioned, is quite in keeping with Jonson's usual turn of thought, as evidenced in his casual censures and criticisms, as well as with his deliberate judgment in "De Shakespeare Nostrati."

The views expressed in his prefatory poems in the first folio in 1623 must be conceded to be written in a different spirit; here he seems ready to praise Shakespeare for some qualities which his other friends did not claim for him, and which Ben Jonson at other times criticised his lack of. The first poem opposite the portrait is not

difficult. Jonson begins by complimenting both the poet and the engraver, but urges the reader to study the book rather than the portrait if he wishes to know Shakespeare, whom he characterizes as "gentle," a trait the opposite of Jonson's own characteristics, but which he concurs with the general opinion of his contemporaries, in applying to Shakespeare. No one who reads these twelve lines can doubt that Ben Jonson was perfectly familiar as well with William Shakespeare's intellectual and moral qualities as with his face.

The longer and principal poem is more difficult of construction, and is in some respects hard to reconcile with some of Ben Jonson's other expressions, but in the main it speaks earnestly and decisively. It is addressed "To the memory of my beloved, the author Mr. William Shakespeare, and what he hath left us." Note the extreme assertion of personal affection. This is entirely consistent with all we know of Jonson's and Shakespeare's personal relations, as well with their early friendship as with Jonson's latest declaration of attachment in "Timber," where he says in the midst of severest criticism, that "he loved the man." And in all Jonson's carping criticism of Shakespeare's writings, and his vehement denunciation of other actors and playwrights, no word of personal reflection on Shakespeare can be found.

In the very beginning of his poem he falls foul of Shakespeare's other admirers and their praises. He says:—

"But these wayes,
Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise
For seeliest Ignorance on these may light,
Which when it sounds at best, but echo's right;
Or blinde Affection, which doth ne'er advance
The truth, but gropes and urgeth all by chance;
Or crafty malice might pretend this praise,
And think to mine, when it seemed to raise.

* * * * *

But thou art proof against them. * * *

These lines seem to me to be the key to the poem. Jonson was indignant at Hemmings and Condell's praise of Shakespeare as a "happie imitator of nature, whose mind and hand went together," in the letter to the "great variety of readers" which immediately preceded Jonson's beautiful poem in the folio, as years afterwards he again overflowed with anger in "Timber" at what he considered injudicious praise of Shakespeare for his defects. [While resolved to praise his dead friend and his works to his highest capacity, Jonson was equally determined, as it seems to me, to score to the uttermost those whom he considered his friend's foolish admirers, and to differentiate his laudation from theirs.]

[In the next division of his poem, rare Ben indulges in a little fling at William Basse, who, as we have seen, in the previous year had poetically suggested to Chaucer, Spenser, and Beaumont to make room in their threefold tomb for Shakespeare. Jonson says:—

"My Shakespeare rise, I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye
A little further to make thee a roome.
Thou art a monument without a tombe
And art alive still while thy booke doth live."

He then proceeds to laud Shakespeare as surpassing not only all the preceding English playwrights, but the great dramatists, comic as well as tragic, of Greece and Rome; but towards the end of the third division of his poem Jonson concludes it is time to make his panegyric absolutely distinct from that of Shakespeare's other friends, and on different grounds:—

"Yet must I not give nature all."

This is exactly what Shakespeare's other admirers usually did, and what Hemmings and Condell and Leonard

Digges had done in their prefatory words to the first folio:—

“Thy art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part,
For though the Poet's matter, nature be;
His art must give the fashion. And that he
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
(Such as thine are) and strike a second heat
Upon the Muse's anvils; turn the same
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame
Or for the laurell, he may gain a scorne,
For a good Poet's made, as well as borne,
And such wert thou.”

Jonson, it is clear, was happy enough to praise his dead friend to the skies as a poet, but in doing so he would not abate a jot from his theories of what a poet must be, so Shakespeare must perforce be brought to Ben's own standard, and be made to labor and sweat, and tediously beat out his lines on the Muse's anvil, because Jonson, while he recognized the lines as good, would not concede or admit that they could be wrought out except by the *labor improbus* which characterized his own method.

Thus, he goes on to say:—

“Looke how the father's face
Lives in his issue; even so the race,
Of Shakespeare's minde and manner brightly shines
In his well toned, and true filled lines,
In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
As brandish't at the Eyes of Ignorance.”

We probably have here one of the usual puns on the poet's name. In conclusion, quoting Shakespeare as the “Sweet Swan of Avon,” he alludes to the admiration both “Eliza and our James” had entertained for his plays, thus confirming in a few lines, the identity of the poet with the Stratford actor, and the tradition of the success his plays had met when performed before royalty. To my mind, the wide divergence between Jonson, on the one hand, and Hemmings and Condell, and Leonard Digges on the other, is a strong argument for the genu-

iness of both. Had not Hemmings and Condell been straightforward and simple-hearted men, it is not likely they would have allowed their great effort to go out to the world, with these discordant notes in the dedication and foreword, and without an attempt to reconcile them; and Jonson in his firm and devoted adherence to his theories, furnishes the strongest confutation to those who would impute to him insincerity. We can, I think, all through his poem read the conflict in his mind between his genuine admiration for his friend and his poetry, and his indignation and contempt for his friend's blind followers and admirers.

In the ensuing years we have in the "Staple of News" and the ode prefixed to the "New Inn," one or two of Ben Jonson's accustomed gibes against Shakespeare's writings or expressions, but in his "Timber, or Discoveries made upon men and matter; as they have flowed out of my daily readings," written some time between 1630 and 1637, but only published posthumously in 1641, we have Ben's final and sincere conclusion of Shakespeare under the head "De Shakespeare Nostrat." This, which may be called Ben Jonson's private, or closet opinion of Shakespeare, is remarkably close in many respects to the beautiful panegyric prefixed to the first folio, but reminds us also of his remarks to Drummond and of several of his criticisms and carping censures. He begins by reference to the players' praise of Shakespeare for his facility, &c.; that he never altered a line. This is exactly what Hemmings and Condell had said in their "letter to the general reader" which gave Jonson such offense. In his poem Jonson combatted, as we have seen, their view as to Shakespeare's manner of composition, and expressed his belief, that Shakespeare as well as himself, had spent laborious nights and days, in hammering out and moulding his lines. Here he accepts their statement, and taking thereupon the other side, says it would have been much better had he given more pains, which

would have saved him from many blunders: "My answer hath been, would he had blotted a thousand." He excuses himself for this speech, which had been taxed as malevolent, by adding, "I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who chose that circumstance to commend their friend by wherein he most faulted." That is, he would have preferred to have handed Shakespeare's name down to posterity, as he did in his poem, as one who was a true and patient artist, as well as gifted genius, but as most of Shakespeare's friends would not have it so, but persisted in lauding him for a style and manner of composition which Jonson abhorred, his devotion to art and candor compelled him to speak out in censure; but this grieved him because of his personal love for the man, and in this I think we can do Ben the justice to say he never wavered.

"And to justifie mine owne candor (for I loved the man, and doe honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any). He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent Phantsie; brave notions, and gentle expressions." For this clear and attractive summary of Shakespeare's personality, which confirms what we had been told of our poet by other contemporaries, such as Davies, Scolloker, Heywood, and Chettle, we must ever be thankful to Ben Jonson.

It was not to be expected, however, that Shakespeare's admirers, now becoming worshippers, would be satisfied with the restricted meed of praise which Jonson was willing in writing and conversation to give Shakespeare. Ben Jonson called their excessive praise idolatry, and they called his criticism malevolence. Is not all this very genuine and human, and is it possible it is all a fraud and a delusion?

The well-known anecdote of the discussion as to the merits of Shakespeare as a poet, between Sir John Suckling, Sir William D'Avenant, Lord Falkland, Ben Jonson, and John Hales of Eton, and the wager or trial which

followed, is, I think, entitled to be viewed as something more than tradition. We have it on the authority, not of Rowe only, but of Dryden, and Dryden knew D'Avenant and wrote plays in association with him. In fact, as will be remembered, Dryden and D'Avenant brought out together in 1667 a revised version of *The Tempest* under the name of *The Enchanted Island*. D'Avenant was the son of Shakespeare's old acquaintance, the landlord of the Crown Inn, at Oxford, and personally knew Shakespeare in his boyhood. The incident must have occurred before 1633, as Lord Falkland died in that year: it shows old Ben maintaining his accustomed thesis of Shakespeare's lack of learning, and being vehemently encountered by Shakespeare's devoted admirers, Sir John Suckling and Mr. Hales. Certain it is that Jonson never forebore his criticisms on Shakespeare's lack of art, of learning, and of assiduous labor, and it is equally certain that as Jonson knew all about Bacon, his learning, his greatness, and his industry, he could not and would not have thus spoken about Shakespeare, had he believed he was talking of Bacon; and that he could have been in ignorance of such a secret as that Shakespeare, whom he knew so intimately, praised so warmly, and criticised so sharply, was not the author of his plays, is inconceivable. Sir John Suckling, just alluded to, was almost a contemporary of Shakespeare, and was his fervent admirer; born in 1609, and a child, therefore, at the time of Shakespeare's death, he lived to the age of thirty-two, dying in 1641. In a poetical letter to the same Mr. Hales of Eton of whom I have just spoken, inviting him to London, Suckling most happily alludes to Shakespeare and Jonson's manner of composition in conversational couplets:—

"The sweat of learned Jonson's brain,
And gentle Shakespeare's easier strain,
A hackney coach conveys you to,
In spite of all that rain can do.
And for your eighteen pence you sit
The Lord and Judge of all fresh wit."

Suckling's friends or family must have had, I think, some personal relation with Shakespeare. [In a letter to a friend, written about 1636, he describes a visit to the part of the river Trent which Hotspur complained of as cutting a monstrous cantle out of his share. Suckling speaks of his friend, Mr. William Shakespeare, and says for his sake he was curious to see this scantlet of ground. But most interesting of Suckling's mentions is what he calls, "A supplement of an imperfect copy of verses of Mr. William Shakespeare." These verses consist of nine lines—one six-line stanza and the three first lines of another, which Suckling says are Shakespeare's—writing in the margin "*Thus far Shakespeare*"—and fifteen lines added by Suckling, which make altogether four six-line stanzas. Suckling's lines are so charming that though we can feel the difference, we can hardly define it.

But the strangest thing about the few Shakespearean lines which describe a lovely girl asleep, is that the first four of the lines in the first Shakespearean stanza and the first three of the second are found with slight modification in the description of Lucrece's slumber in the "Rape of Lucrece," but in that poem the stanzas are of seven instead of six lines each, and the latter parts of the stanzas are quite different. It would look as if in some way there must have come into Suckling's hands a manuscript of a variant form of the Lucrece, or of another intended poem of Shakespeare's, using the same general ideas. [I hope I will be pardoned for inserting both the three first stanzas of the imperfect poem as supplemented by Suckling, and the stanzas from "The Rape of Lucrece" which contain the corresponding lines. It may be remarked that the verses supplemented by Suckling are in the form and metre of "Venus and Adonis," which it is not improbable Shakespeare would have adopted in the first sketch of his ensuing poem, though afterwards changed to a seven-line stanza.

SUCKLING'S COPY OF VERSES.

I.

One of her hands, one of her cheeks lay under.
 Cozening the pillow of a lawful kisse,
 Which therefore swell'd and seemed to part asunder
 As angry to be rob'd of such a blisse:
 The one lookt pale, and for revenge did long,
 Whilst t'other blusht, cause it had done the wrong.

II.

Thus far
 Shakespeare. Out of the bed the other fair hand was
 On a green satin quilt, whose perfect white
 Lookt like a Dazie in a field of grasse,
 And shew'd like unmelt snow unto the sight,
 There lay this pretty perdue, safe to keep
 The rest of th' body that lay fast asleep.

III.

Her eyes (and therefore it was night) close laid,
 Strove to imprison beauty till the morn,
 But yet the doors were of such fine stuffe made
 That it broke through, and shew'd itself in scorn,
 Throwing a kind of light about the place,
 Which turnd to smiles stil as't came near her face.

RAPE OF LUCRECE.

(Lines 386-396.)

Her Lilly hand her rosie cheeke lies under,
 Cozining the pillow of a lawful kisse
 Which therefore angry, seemed to part in sunder.
 Swelling on either side to want his blisse,
 Between whose hills her head entombed is;
 Where like a vertuous monument she lies,
 To be admirde of lewd unhallowed eyes.

Without her bed her other fayre hand was
 On the greene coverlet, whose perfect white
 Shewd like an Aprill daisie on the grasse
 With pearlie sweat, resembling dew of night.

But one more witness and I have done. This witness
 is, after Shakespeare, the greatest English poet, and was
 almost a contemporary. John Milton was also born in
 1609. In his earlier days he was fond of the drama, and

fondly admired Shakespeare, whom he called, as we will see, "My Shakespeare." There was something in the man that even after his death awoke personal attachment. In 1630, when just of age, and probably still at college, Milton wrote the "Epitaph on the admirable dramattick poet W. Shakespeare" which was prefixed to the second folio in 1632. In this he proclaims Shakespeare's independence of any hand-raised monument for the perpetuation of his fame, and, fully accepting his fellows' account of Shakespeare's marvelous facility of composition, wrote:—

"What neede my Shakespeare for his honour'd bones,
The labour of an age in piled stones,
Or that his hallow'd Reliques should be hid
Under a starre-y-pointing Pyramid?
Dear sonne of Memory, great heir of Fame,
What needs't thou such dull witnessse of thy Name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a lasting monument;

* * Whilst to the shame of slow endeavouring Art
Thy easie numbers flow."

Jonson, who was a Cambridge man, and whose learning must have commended him to Milton, was living, but Milton adopted the view of Hemmings and Condell and Leonard Digges, and antagonized Ben Jonson as Suckling did. A few years later and after some time spent in London, where Milton had the opportunity of seeing both Jonson's and Shakespeare's plays on the stage and may have met Ben Jonson personally, he wrote the famed lines in "L'Allegro" in commendation of the stage:—

"Then to the well trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or Sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild."

Certainly Milton, mingling with the circle of literary people in London where Shakespeare's memory was yet fresh and green, heard no hint that Bacon, only a few

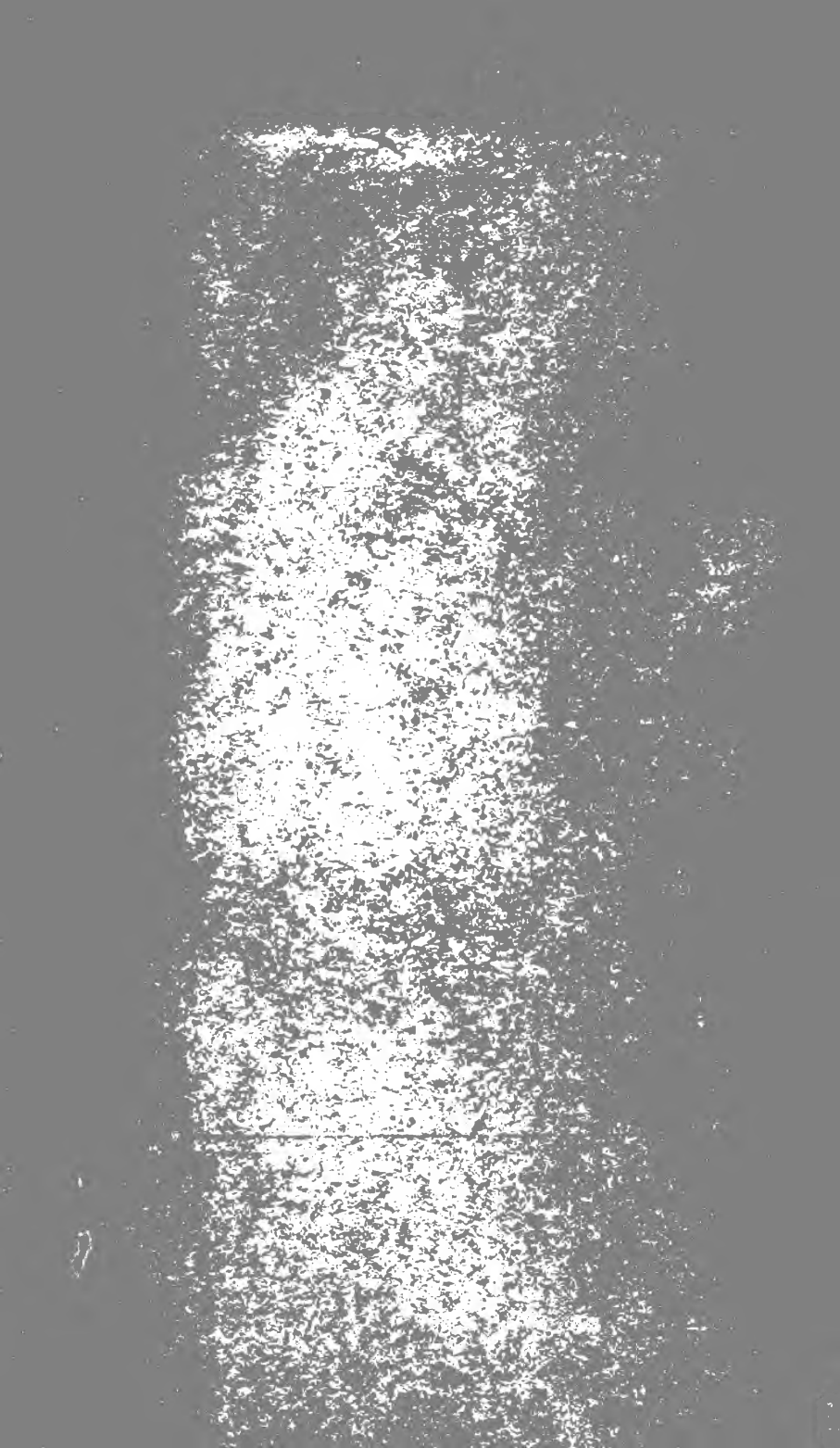
years deceased, was the author of the plays; nor, profoundly learned and cultured as he was, did he seem to perceive any insuperable difficulty in his being the author of the plays which he spoke of as "easie numbers and wood-notes wild," but evidently preferred to Jonson's learned dramas. [Still later, when the stress of civil war had passed over the land and Milton himself had espoused with passionate earnestness the cause which would have been most repugnant to Shakespeare's sympathies, he retained his interest in, and appreciation of the dramatist in his historical plays. Thus in his "Eikonoklastes," published as an answer to the "Eikon Basilike" in 1643, he takes advantage of Charles I.'s known devotion to Shakespeare, to compare him to the Richard III. of his favorite author, in the hypocrisy, and pretended devotion to religion, of which he accuses Charles, and adds that "the poet used not much license in departing from the truth of history, which defines him as a deep dissembler, not of his affections only, but of Religion."] Certainly Milton, who was as a statesman necessarily familiar with Lord Verulam and his political writings, never suspected him to be the author of *Richard III.* Had he done so, Bacon's doubts as to the character of that remarkable monarch, as hinted in his *Henry VII.*, would certainly have occurred to him.

[Thus from 1592, when William Shakespeare first began to be talked of as a writer of plays, down to a period some twenty years after his death, the writings of his contemporaries show a gradual rise and steady progress and development of his fame—perfectly simple and natural, if these productions were the genuine writings of William Shakespeare, but very strange if they were not his. [We find the plays and poems both accepted without any exhibition of wonder or surprise by the actors, his daily companions and fellow craftsmen, as well as by persons in a higher class of life. We find

that many of his plays were recognized and accepted as Shakespeare's before they had been given to the public, except on the stage, and that the sonnets passed from hand to hand in private circulation, many years before they were published. We find that the voice of adverse criticism was not entirely silent but that his works were criticised, for faults natural to one who had largely educated himself during his career as a writer, and was lacking in the advantages of early and systematic study. We find further, however, that the character of the actor Shakespeare, is the subject of one uniform and steady current of praise, for gentleness, simplicity, kindness and honesty, from the time of poor Green's death, whose attack furnished the one discordant note in the laudatory anthem. And during all this period neither friend nor critic expressed either doubt as to the authorship, or an idea of incongruity, in the player Shakespeare being the author of the plays or poems. If therefore it was the case that the actor Shakespeare was a man of low tastes and slight abilities, incapable of writing the works attributed to him, who for whatever reason lent his name ~~either to Francis Bacon,~~ or some unknown genius, it seems to me we would have to postulate, not merely a conspiracy of silence, but a conspiracy of imposture, to which not only decent and respectable actors such as Hemmings and Condell, Burbage, &c., but such authors and writers as Ben Jonson, Thomas Heywood, Michael Drayton, Francis Meres, John Weever, John Davies and Leonard Digges were parties, and to which noblemen of such high position and character as the Earl of Southampton, who was personally hostile to Bacon, and those two noble brothers, the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, who had no special friendship for him, were privy; and that this conspiracy, thus known among so many, was yet so closely kept, that such men as Milton and Suckling writing but a few years later, while many

2
of William Shakespeare's the actor's contemporaries were living, and while the details of his life were lovingly cherished, never heard an inkling or suspicion that fancy's child, warbling his wood notes wild, was only a fictitious being, compounded of a rather coarse and ignorant actor, and a secluded writer whose position was so lofty, or whose pride was so peculiar, that he was ashamed to be known as the author of the plays, which were at once the delight of the people, and the admiration of the scholar.

1
My remarks may perhaps be justly criticised as containing nothing new. This is, of course, true, as on this side of the ocean, original research in Elizabethan and Jacobean records and antiquities is impossible; and I have not cited or quoted anything which is not to be found in books more or less familiar to the Shakespearean student. But it has seemed to me that much of this evidence, though in no respect new, has been largely forgotten of late years, and that in its collocation and discussion, I may perhaps have been able to draw from this mass of evidence, viewed as a whole, logical inferences and conclusions which are not without value. At the least, I hope to have been able to present in compendious form a sheaf of effective arrows with which the lover of our gentle friend and fellow, William Shakespeare, may arm his bow of English or Spanish yew for the discomfiture of the assailing hosts of cipher worshippers, syndicate dreamers, and Baconian idolaters.



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